

EXPERIENTIAL CONSTRUCT ELICITATION:
USING FOCUSING TO ACCESS MORE
MEANINGFUL CONSTRUCTS

BY

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A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

1997

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many people who have provided me with support, guidance, and friendship throughout the years in my journey to obtain this degree to whom I am grateful: to the entire faculty of the Counseling Psychology program and the Albany Psychology Internship Consortium, who have created environments where students are treated as colleagues and given ample opportunity to grow into that distinguished company; to Dr. Maggie Labarta who taught me how to practice outside the sheltered walls of academia and became a dear friend; to Dr. Franz Epting who has inspired my thought and guided my steps throughout graduate school; to my wife, Anita, who has held my hand, given me the strength to complete my goals, and carries in her love the promise of tomorrow; and, to my parents, Gene and Faye Pittman, who have always stood by me with unwavering love and support. To these people, and to many other friends, teachers, and clients I wish to express my deepest gratitude.

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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May, 1997

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This study investigates the application of experiential awareness techniques to construct elicitation. The elicitation of personal constructs is used to gain better understanding of a person's means of interpreting the world, and is a standard practice in constructivist oriented psychology. Various constructivists have called for using a more experiential approach to clinical practice and research. It was proposed that using an experiential approach to the repertory grid procedure would lead to the elicitation of constructs which are more meaningful for the person. Eugene Gendlin's Focusing technique was adapted to the grid procedure in an effort to enhance experiential

awareness and facilitate the verbalization of that awareness.

A sample of 42 undergraduate students completed repertory grids using one of three procedures: standard triadic elicitation; guided imagery elicitation; and Focusing elicitation. The meaningfulness of the elicited constructs was measured using a rating of perceived construct meaningfulness and by the extremity of construct ratings regarding various people.

The hypothesis that Focusing would elicit more meaningful constructs overall was supported by the importance rating dependent variable, but not by the extremity score dependent variable. A second hypothesis, that Focusing would lead to participants producing progressively more meaningful constructs in latter elicitation trials, was not supported by either dependent variable. There was also an unexpected Elicitation X Sex X Trial interaction noted for extremity scores. Specifically, extremity scores for participants in the guided imagery control group tended to be influenced by the Sex and Trial independent variables. It is argued that this may have been due to differences in males' and females' reactions to the various tasks presented in the guided imagery script.

The results of this study do support the call for fostering experiential awareness in assessment and

psychotherapy. However, there is a need for a greater understanding of the concept of construct meaningfulness and its measure. Gendlin's Focusing procedure and other techniques which function to enhance experiential awareness may prove to be valuable tools for constructivist clinicians and researchers. Further study is needed in order to better understand the uses and benefits of enhancing experiential awareness in clinical practice and research.

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years, constructivist approaches to psychology have had an increasingly influential impact on psychological theory and psychotherapy. This interest is perhaps best demonstrated by the American Psychological Association's recent publication of Constructivism in Psychotherapy (Neimeyer and Mahoney, 1995), which is likely to serve as an introduction to constructivist thinking and techniques to many students and practitioners in the field of psychology. Aspects of a constructivistic approach were evident in the work of Alfred Adler and many of the early existentialists. However, there was not a formalized constructivist theory until the seminal work of George Kelly and his publication of the text that laid the foundation for constructivist approaches, The Psychology of Personal Constructs: A Theory of Personality (Kelly, 1955).

Kelly's approach was a radical departure from the prevailing theories of the day, most notably behaviorism and psychoanalysis. Instead of seeing individuals as being directed by external reinforcers or unconscious drives,

Kelly viewed people as teleologic scientists who actively seek out an understanding of their environment through their interaction with it. He coined the term "man as scientist" (Kelly, 1955) to describe the experimental process by which an individual formulates hypotheses in order to anticipate events, and tests those hypotheses by examining the outcomes. This examination leads to confirmation, disconfirmation, or elaboration of one's hypotheses, and allows the individual to construct a working theory of the world which guides one's future actions.

An underlying assumption which is central to Kelly's Personal Construct Psychology, and to constructivist approaches in general, is that people access their environment only through the interpretation of their perceptions. Thus, people function based on their interpretations of their perceptions of reality rather than on reality itself. Since no one has direct access to a concrete reality, constructivist psychologists do not propose to correct faulty cognitions or teach correct ways of thinking as cognitive psychologists might. Instead, they focus their efforts toward gaining a fuller understanding of an individual's hypotheses and anticipations about the world, otherwise referred to as a person's construct system. By developing an understanding of a person's construct system, researchers and clinicians hope to understand how it

is that one functions in the world and to assist individuals in their efforts to modify behaviors and emotions.

Kelly (1955) proposed that an individual's constructs are organized in a hierarchical structure, with some constructs being superordinate in the construct system. These superordinate constructs would have greater implications to the rest of the construct system than would subordinate constructs, and thus, would be more meaningful in the individual's interpretation of the world and the self. It is usually with these more meaningful constructs that psychotherapy clients require assistance during the course of therapy (Epting, 1984). However, it is also these more meaningful constructs that are most resistant to change (Kelly, 1955; Leitner, 1984). Oftentimes, superordinate constructs may be preverbal (Epting, 1984), and thus difficult to identify and understand utilizing verbal tools.

Constructivists have long sought means of gathering information about superordinate constructs. Hinkle (1966) developed a technique, laddering, which continues to prove useful in eliciting a string of constructs which extends into superordinate constructions (Neimeyer, R., 1993). Another approach has been to use questions about the implications a construct has to how a person views the world to elicit more meaningful constructs (Neimeyer, R., 1993). These methods, as well as standard repertory grid

elicitation, are limited in that they depend on the subject/client having a pre-existing verbal label for the construct dimension being described, and thus, are limited to constructs to which one already has a cognitive representation.

Contemporary theorists in humanistic psychology (Gendlin, 1996) and constructivist psychology (Greenberg & Pascual-Leone, 1995, and Guidano, 1995 a) have called for the utilization of experiential methods to the processes of therapy and assessment. They argue that experiential methods will allow subjects/clients to go beyond the level of cognitive awareness they already possess and to verbalize insights which they previously did not know how to verbalize.

Eugene Gendlin speaks of looking past those answers of which one is already aware, and using one's ability to reflect upon the lived experience, of searching for a path to guide one to the words that most accurately reflect the lived experience (Gendlin, 1995). In attempting to describe this experiential level of awareness and the struggle to match it with words, Gendlin likens the process to the experience of writing a poem. One may produce the first few lines with little effort; but, at a point one struggles for the correct words. Words come to the poet, but they are not the right words. The poet knows that they are not the right

words, even though she does not know what the right words are, because at an experiential level there is an awareness that has not yet been verbalized. Upon finding the words that fit the experiential knowledge, the poet feels a sense of ease (Gendlin, 1995). After reflecting on Gendlin's words, I pose the following query to myself: If I ask a question to which a person is readily able to provide an answer, have I helped that person learn more about himself?

Gendlin has developed a specific technique for promoting the exploration and verbalization of experiential awareness which he calls "Focusing" (Gendlin, 1969, 1971, 1983, 1996). Focusing is a technique which teaches the individual to attend to emotional and physical responses in conjunction with intellectual responses. In an earlier publication I proposed applying Gendlin's Focusing technique to Kelly's repertory grid procedure in an effort to elicit more meaningful constructs (Epting, Probert, & Pittman, 1993).

In a subsequent study, I (Pittman, 1993) hypothesized that utilizing the Focusing technique during the assessment procedure of construct elicitation would lead to the elicitation of more meaningful constructs and negate a well established pattern for the level of meaningfulness to decline across repeated trials (McDonagh & Adams-Webber, 1987). Constructs were elicited using an abbreviated form

of Focusing. The Focusing elicited constructs were compared to constructs elicited by standard triadic elicitation and a progressive relaxation elicitation.

I found marginal support for the negation of the decline in meaningfulness, but the hypothesis that Focusing would generate more meaningful constructs was not supported. Analysis of the results appeared to indicate that sampling error and an uncontrolled confound had an impact on the analysis of the data and increased the probability of a Type II error. The sampling error was evident in that the results of the first elicitation were measured as markedly less meaningful for the Focusing group than for the two control groups, despite all three groups being subject to identical conditions for the first elicitation.

The data from this initial study also produced an unexpected result that appeared to add to the error variance, thus increasing the probability of a Type II error. This was evident in that the meaningfulness levels of the experimental and control groups varied systematically in a pattern that seemed to indicate that the stimuli used for construct elicitation, various groups of three persons the subject personally knew (triadic sorts), affected the level of meaningfulness of the elicited construct. This was an unexpected result and had not been the subject of previous study. Subsequently, a colleague and I (Calbeck

and Pittman) have conducted a study to examine this effect (noted in Chapter III and Appendix A).

Upon further reflection on the 1993 study, and upon receiving further training in Focusing with Dr. Gendlin and others at the Focusing Institute during the summer of 1993, it was evident that the Focusing procedure would be more likely to have an impact on the elicitation process if it were taught on an individual basis, rather than in the group format utilized in the previous study. Further investigation was warranted into attempts to increase the level of meaningfulness by using experiential methods, specifically the Focusing procedure.

The results of the 1993 experiment (Pittman, 1993) and the study regarding the effect various triadic sorts have on the measured levels of meaningfulness of elicited constructs were utilized to refine the experimental process. The information garnered from the triadic sorts study was utilized to reduce error variance in this study. I also conducted the Focusing training and construct elicitation on an individual basis and in a less structured manner in an attempt to adhere more closely to Gendlin's presentation of Focusing procedure and to maximize the effect of this experiential intervention. The specific application of the experiential techniques to repertory grid procedure may prove valuable in that it may aid in the elicitation of more

meaningful or previously nonverbalized constructs. The verbalization of one's experience is not only a process of discovery (assessment), but is simultaneously a process of elaboration as well. As such, it is a therapeutic process in its own right. Should this experiment indicate that the Focusing procedure does provide an avenue for gaining a greater understanding of a person's more meaningful constructs, it would support the current calls for more experientially based therapeutic interventions and research, and provide clinicians with evidence that experiential methods, such as Focusing, can be valuable assessment and therapeutic tools.

CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I will review the literature which is pertinent to the application of an experiential technique, specifically a modified version of Eugene Gendlin's Focusing technique, to the construct elicitation assessment process. Initially, this review will give a brief overview of philosophical positions regarding the relationship between the mind and the body. There is then an overview of some of the major body oriented psychotherapy approaches, primarily Gestalt and Bioenergetics. I then provide a description of Eugene Gendlin's experientially based approach to psychotherapy, Focusing Oriented Psychotherapy, and the Focusing procedure. The final three sections deal with aspects of constructivism. I will discuss the nature of preverbal constructs and the importance unverbalized constructs play in psychotherapy. Next, there is a discussion of construct meaningfulness and hierarchy, which includes issues regarding the measurement of these characteristics. The final literature review section examines the call for a more experientially oriented

constructivist psychology. These somewhat diverse content areas are brought together in order to provide a foundation for the application of an experientially based intervention to the repertory grid assessment procedure.

Physiological Aspects of Emotional Awareness

The physiologic reactions of clients to emotion have played a role in psychotherapy since its inception. It was the presentation of bodily symptoms which did not fit known anatomical characteristics, such as glove anesthesia, which first led the physician, Sigmund Freud, to explore a talking cure. The nature of the relationship between the mind, body, and psychological processes has been the subject of philosophical debate since the time of Aristotle and Plato. Each theory of psychology is predicated on its explanation of the mind-body relationship. Two general camps of belief are used to describe this relationship, dualism and monism.

Dualism, the belief in a distinct split between the mind and the body, is based in Platonic thought. One variation of dualism views the mind as the central feature of humanity, with the body playing a secondary role (Leahy, 1987). This is the underlying philosophical position seen in early psychodynamically oriented theories as well as newer approaches, such as Psychobiological Psychotherapy

(Rossi, 1990). A divergent form of dualism, one based on Cartesian philosophy, relegates consciousness to the realm of epiphenomena and gives primacy to physiological processes. This philosophy is at the root of motor theories, such as Classical Behaviorism and Radical Behaviorism (Leahy, 1987).

The monistic philosophical position, which can be traced back to the teachings of Aristotle (Leahy, 1987), views the body and mind as operating as an integrated entity. In reflecting upon the draw of seeing human existence dualistically versus monistically, George Kelly wrote,

. . . what is mind can hardly be construed except in ways that are 'intellectualized,' and what is 'body' can hardly be construed by him except in ways that are 'mechanical.' He cannot construe his facts comprehensively except as he goes back to the earliest forms of preverbal thinking. Only at that primitive level may we find that the 'mind' and the 'body' were not preemptively separated. (Kelly, 1955, p.921)

The nineteenth and twentieth century existential philosophers such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty strongly influenced modern monistic approaches (Shaffer, 1978), including Existential psychotherapy, Gestalt psychotherapy, and a wide array of humanistic approaches. A consideration of physiological processes is often incorporated into their approaches to psychotherapy. A brief overview of various bodily oriented approaches may

provide a catalyst for the utilization of experiential techniques.

Gestalt Approaches

Gestalt approaches have been described as "supremely experiential" in that the therapist places a strong emphasis on the client's physiological reaction and focus on the "moment-to-moment flow of awareness" (Shaffer, 1978, p.87). Two concepts central to the practice of Gestalt therapy are to help the client recognize and accept all of the various aspects of oneself, and to take responsibility for oneself and one's actions. Typically, a Gestalt therapist may keenly observe a client's bodily reactions and direct the client's attention to those reactions in order that the reactions may become therapeutic vehicles. A Gestalt therapist may direct a client to exaggerate a curled-up posture or the tapping of a foot. The client and therapist then explore the meaning behind the bodily reaction in relation to issues being explored in the therapy session. Gestalt therapists consider body movement to symbolize an unconscious level of awareness (Shaffer, 1978).

Gestalt theorists differentiate between intelligent awareness and psychophysical awareness. Kempler (1973) notes that these two types of awareness are "distinctly different and inseparable" (p. 259). He describes these

types of awareness as being unified at birth, but later splitting as a result of the civilizing process and the development of the ability to conceptualize. Kempler argues that, once this splitting has occurred, a single event can be experienced in two distinct ways. The individual may have awareness on one level, and simultaneously have no awareness on the other level. Kempler further notes that intelligent awareness can modify or distort an experience through the use of conceptual understanding, while psychophysical awareness offers the experience in its unmodified form. He contends that it is the aim of therapy to help the client bring these levels of awareness into correspondence with each other.

Gestalt Therapy responds to coordinated psychophysical awareness and does not respect intelligent awareness when it functions independently. When they are separated, the Gestalt therapist listens to intelligent awareness with one ear while searching with the other for a message from psychophysical awareness. Gestalt Therapy talks to intelligent awareness as though it were a messenger boy being instructed to return to the company in which it works to deliver information. Part of the work of Gestalt Therapy is to coordinate intelligent and psychophysiological awareness wherever they are found alienated from one another. (Kempler, 1973, p. 260)

More recent variations of the Gestalt approach, such as Edward Smith's Embodied Psychotherapy (Smith, 1990), place an even greater emphasis on developing physiological awareness.

Lowen's Bioenergetics

Alexander Lowen (1975), under the influence of his mentor Wilhelm Reich, developed a therapeutic approach which utilizes physiological awareness as a means to psychological intervention. Reich proposed that emotional repression or blockage is expressed as muscular tension, a phenomenon he termed "character body armor," (Shaffer, 1978). Lowen went on to propose that psychological change must be accompanied by a change in the bodily experience, stating "unfortunately information does not become knowledge unless it has relevance to experience. We constantly overlook the fact that experience is a bodily phenomenon. One only experiences that which takes place in the body" (Lowen, 1975, p.62). Lowen viewed adults as functioning on two levels simultaneously, one with physiologic awareness and one with a psychic awareness (1975, p.142). He reported that many of his patients complained of physical pain as well as emotional discomfort. Lowen found that, by using physical techniques to first accentuate then relieve the physical pain, his patients would frequently become aware of repressed emotional pain. This emotional pain was then addressed by way of additional physical interventions as well as more conventional verbal therapy. Lowen considered the estrangement of the psychic and physiologic levels of

awareness to be a central obstacle to the patient's ability to resolve life problems. While some therapists continue to practice Bioenergetic therapy, other clinicians and researchers have taken different approaches to bridging the schism between psychic and physiologic awareness.

Focusing Oriented Psychotherapy

Humanistic theories have the common element of a belief in an innate tendency for humans to grow and develop toward higher, or healthier, functioning. Kelly argues that the force for this growth, motivation, is an inherent aspect of the human condition (Kelly 1955). With his Choice Corollary, "A person chooses for himself that alternative in a dichotomized construct through which he anticipates the greater possibility for extension and definition of his system" (Kelly, 1963, p. 64), Kelly provides an explanation for the mechanism and direction of growth.

Eugene Gendlin argues that while not all human processes necessarily lead to healthier functioning, there is an innate and fundamental process by which growth and development occur. He further points out that this process must be trusted and that the therapist must not attempt to impose values on the content of the individuals experience.

We do not need a metaphysical assumption that human process always moves toward health. We do not want sloppy optimism. With so much suffering and destructiveness all around us, optimism is an insult to those who suffer. But pessimism is an insult to life. Life always has its own forward direction, whatever else may also be occurring.

To follow or encourage a growth direction is very different from promoting a set of values, an idea of 'good' or 'bad.' Contents do not stay static. What seems bad soon opens and alters what we think is bad. Therefore good and bad must be rethought just as all notions of content must be rethought.

Theory cannot direct the process we are discussing because it has its own direction. But theory (a new kind of theory) can find the 'direction' even though it is not definable in terms of its content. (Gendlin, 1996, p.23)

Gendlin has developed an approach to a psychotherapy which fosters and utilizes this growth direction. He has referred to this approach as "Experiential Psychotherapy" (Gendlin, 1969, 1973, 1978) and, more recently, as "Focusing-Oriented Psychotherapy" (Gendlin, 1996). His, approach is deeply experiential and places strong emphasis on awareness of the present and self-responsibility.

In the middle nineteen-sixties, Gendlin began developing a psychotherapy and personal growth technique he called "Focusing" (Gendlin, 1964, 1969, 1973, 1981, 1986, 1996). Focusing is designed to match verbal labels with a person's experiential awareness of the moment.

Gendlin notes that most people have become disembodied in their daily lives.

When thinking is cut off from the other kinds of experience, it is called 'intellectualizing' and brings little psychological change. Most people do not know that an experientially connected kind of thinking is even possible. We have been taught to think at a great distance from experience. Even when we want to think about a specific experience, we often leave our direct sense of it behind, in order to think about it. As soon as we have one thought about it, we think from that thought to another and another, without ever returning to the experience to see if our thoughts do justice to it. (Gendlin, 1996, pp.240-41)

This intellectual knowing without experiencing limits one's ability to take a fresh perspective or create a new way of being. According to Gendlin, "experiencing is always more intricate than concepts" (Gendlin, 1996, p.268). The lived bodily experience goes beyond the language symbols people have available for expressing thought. In an earlier work where he discussed the philosophical aspects of meaning, Gendlin stated, "meaning is formed in the interaction of experiencing and something that functions symbolically. Feeling without symbolization is blind; symbolization without feeling is empty" (Gendlin, 1990, p.5).

Gendlin's approach relies on a level of awareness which he calls a "felt sense," a level of consciousness where an experience is available but not yet in conscious awareness.

What I am referring to is the layer of the unconscious that is likely to come up next. This is at first sensed somatically, not yet known or opened, not yet in the 'preconscious.' Freud had no term for this layer. Nor has there been a term for it in the common language. We now call it a 'felt sense.' (Gendlin, 1996, p.19)

As a heretofore undefined entity, the felt sense requires a great deal of explanation. The felt sense is a level of awareness that goes beyond what is known intellectually, and is more encompassing than the mere experience of physical and emotional reactions.

Experience is often thought of as if it consisted only of feelings, interactions, cognitions, memories, actions, images, and so on. But is it really divided into these neat little packages? . . . The felt sense is an experiential mesh that is not divided. At the conscious-unconscious border zone one senses the ongoing experiential process, and it is always implicitly intricate. That means it includes a whole range of images, feelings, actions, and so on that have never happened as such, but could come. (Gendlin 1996, p.174)

The felt sense is a total awareness which encompasses what is known intellectually, felt physically, and experienced emotionally; "A felt sense contains a maze of meanings, a whole texture of facets, a Persian rug of patterning--more than could be said or thought" (Gendlin, 1996, p.58). There are eight characteristics of a felt sense:

1. A felt sense forms at the border zone between conscious and unconscious.
2. The felt sense has at first only an unclear quality (although unique and unmistakable).
3. The felt sense is experienced bodily.
4. The felt sense is experienced as a whole, a single datum that is internally complex.
5. The felt sense moves through steps; it shifts and opens step by step.
6. A step brings one closer to being that self which is not any content.

7. The process step has its own growth direction.
8. Theoretical explanations of a step can be devised only retrospectively. (Gendlin, 1996, p.24)

Most people do not look to the felt sense when thinking about their experience. From Gendlin's perspective, the ability to experience oneself in a lived, bodily sense is crucial to psychological health and psychotherapy; psychological maladjustment is "the loss of touch with one's inward experience" (Gendlin, 1973, p.331).

Gendlin and his colleagues have reported several studies which indicate that the degree to which one is able to experience the therapeutic process on a "whole body" level, versus a "cognitive only" level, and to work on the edge of what is known and unknown, is highly associated with the degree of success one will experience in therapy (Gendlin 1969, 1973, 1996; Mathieu-Coughlan & Klein, 1984). This ability to experience one's state of felt existence was found to be a strong predictor of therapeutic outcome; the more able one is to experience this felt existence and explore the edge of one's awareness of meaning, the more likely one is to have a successful therapeutic outcome.

In its most basic form, Focusing-Oriented Therapy relies on the following process: The client is taught Focusing and develops or enhances an ability to experience a present holistic awareness. This awareness leads to more

authentic living, and authentic living is the goal of Focusing-Oriented psychotherapy.

Focusing is a method of inquiry of one's bodily sense in order to gain further understanding and articulate what is going on in one's life. Gendlin notes that when he uses the word "body," he means the body "as sensed from inside" (Gendlin, 1996, p.181). He contends that people utilize body based knowing daily without bringing bodily knowing into consciousness.

Your body feels the complexity of each situation, and enacts much of what you do all day without your needing to think about each move. What you think is of course important, but you can think of only a few things at one time. It is your body that totals up the whole situation and comes up with appropriate actions most of the time. Human bodies live immediately and directly in each situation. (Gendlin, 1996, p.181)

In order to develop and capitalize on this body based awareness, Gendlin teaches his clients the Focusing procedure. Once a client has learned the Focusing procedure, the procedure can be used as a self-awareness/personal growth exercise or be used as a technique to aid in psychotherapy. Once a client is skilled at Focusing, the client may choose to utilize only selected steps of the procedure for any given experience. Ideally, a person who has learned Focusing will utilize a Focusing approach daily to enhance awareness of one's experience.

Focusing is a six "movement" procedure. The following is a summary of the movements and their instructions:

First Movement: Clearing a space.

The client may be instructed to, "Ask yourself, 'How do I feel? Why don't I feel wonderful right now? What is bugging me on this particular day?" The client is then instructed to "Stay quiet. Listen. Let what comes come," and to passively let any and all currently troublesome issues to accumulate on a list without giving priority to any particular one. The client does this in a detached manner until one feels that the troublesome thoughts are all listed. An alternative approach that is highly effective, but somewhat startling, is to have the client say, "Everything in my life is perfect just the way it is," and observe all of the thoughts that arise about those things that are not perfect.

The focusing client is then asked to "step back" emotionally from the troublesome thoughts, acknowledging that the thoughts are concerns, but giving oneself permission not to be concerned about these things right now. The "clearing a space" step is complete when the focuser can comfortably say, "except for those, I am fine."

Second Movement: Felt sense of the problem.

The client chooses a concern or feeling to focus on, and then asks oneself, "What does this whole thing feel

like?" The most difficult part of this movement is getting past the details, self-talk, and attempts at figuring out an answer to the problem. One must "stand back" from trying to solve the problem and just observe until getting a sense of "what does this whole thing feel like?". It is important that one is able to gain a safe distance from the problem so as to not be overwhelmed by it and to be able to observe it. Gendlin notes that a felt sense "will have a certain bodily quality, such as, jumpy, heavy, sticky, jittery, or tight. At times the bodily quality might best be described in words that are also the names of emotions, for example scared, shameful, or guilty" (1996, p.59). A felt sense is not just a bodily sensation, but is a bodily felt awareness about something. Gendlin explains that even though a felt sense might be best described by the names of emotions, the felt sense is not the same as an emotion.

The felt sense conveys much more than an emotion.

The first and main difference between an emotion and a felt sense is that an emotion is recognizable. We usually know just what emotion we have. When we are angry, sad, or joyful we not only feel it but we know what it is. But with a felt sense we say, 'I can feel it, right there, but I don't know what it is.' A felt sense has its own meaning, but it is usually more intricate than we can express with the usual phrases and categories. (p.58)

Third Movement: Finding a handle.

The task during this movement is to find a word or image, a "handle," which will capture the quality of the

felt sense. The goal is to translate the experience of the awareness provided by the felt sense into a symbol (verbal, visual, auditory) that will capture the essence of that experience. What one is after is the "core" of the felt sense, the crux of "all that" which is contained in the felt sense. Gendlin likens the "handle" of a felt sense to a more familiar object, "As with the handle of a suitcase, which brings with it the whole weight of the suitcase, the whole weight of the felt sense is brought forward by that one word or phrase when one repeats it to oneself" (Gendlin, 1996, p.48). As words or other types of symbols come up, the felt sense might start to change. It may feel different than expected, different from anything that might have arisen from rational analysis. When the felt sense changes, when there is a slight bodily shift, one has found a "handle" for the felt sense.

Fourth Movement: Resonating between the handle and the felt sense.

In this movement, one checks the "fit" between the word label and the felt sense. Either or both may shift during this process until they feel just right together. To do this, one must maintain contact with the bodily felt sense, and not let it go as soon as a verbal label is found. Once the match between the felt sense and the word are just right, one pauses for a minute or two to allow the body to adjust to this new awareness.

Fifth Movement: Asking.

While patiently staying in touch with the felt sense, one now asks the felt sense for a fuller understanding of the problem. The following questions have been found to be helpful--"What is it about this whole problem that makes me so _____?", "What is the worst of this?", or "What would it take for this to feel OK?". If the felt sense provides an answer which leads to a deeper understanding, there will also be a shift in the bodily felt sense which feels good.

Sixth Movement: Receiving.

The awareness or message that arises from the focusing exercise is welcomed, no matter what it is. If one takes a "receiving" attitude, welcoming anything that comes with the body shift yet staying a little distance away from it, one will not be overwhelmed by the message. The result of any Focusing is to be considered a starting point for further exploration, not as a definitive answer which precludes further exploration (Gendlin, 1981, pp. 52 - 61).

These movements constitute the basic components of Focusing. After one learns the process, Focusing can proceed as a continuous flow of awareness, openness, and moving forward into new awareness. Once a client is familiar with Focusing, it can be utilized in conjunction with practically any other therapeutic technique.

What can be achieved through these Focusing steps is that one can tap into a greater level of awareness than is available at a purely cognitive level, and by capturing this awareness in words or other symbols, can bring this awareness to the cognitive level. Doing so not only changes one's cognitive awareness, but also changes the way the issue is experienced on a bodily felt level. Gendlin refers to Focusing as "a conversation between the felt sense and the cognitive side" (1996, p. 238). He contends that cognition is only one level of many levels of organizing performed in the human experience.

Once a symbolic handle has been found for the felt sense and there has been a shift in the awareness and experience, the person has been carried forward in the direction of growth. This carrying forward allows for different subsequent experiences and fuller awareness.

For Gendlin (1996), pathology occurs when an individual is blocked from being carried forward toward further experiencing. This is similar to Kelly's (1955) notion that the key to healthy psychological functioning is to continue to revise one's construct by means of lived experimentation. One aspect of Gendlin's approach that is particularly ripe for further experiencing and continuing revision of one's view of oneself in the world is that it invites unpredictability in the lived experience.

Focusing is both an active and a passive endeavor simultaneously. While one very actively attends to the felt sense, one does not attempt to direct the path of this process. That the person Focusing allows whatever experience and awareness that presents itself to arise provides an opportunity for unexpected insights and understandings to present themselves. In this situation, the individual's potential for growth and resolution of problem areas can meet with novel concepts which have not been channelized by prior attempts to resolve the problem.

It is this openness to novel and unexpected facets of awareness coupled with utilization of the felt sense that makes Gendlin's approach unique and an exciting prospect for further application. In his earlier work (1969, 1981) Gendlin emphasized the step by step mechanics of teaching the Focusing procedure. He later applied Focusing to dream interpretation (Gendlin, 1986). In his most recent book (Gendlin, 1996), Gendlin places less emphasis on the mechanics of Focusing, and instead emphasizes reliance on the felt sense and an openness to new experience as a fundamental approach which can be utilized in a wide variety of therapeutic approaches.

In 1984, Epting (p.19) suggested that it may be fruitful for Constructivists to adopt Gendlin's Focusing technique as a means to gain greater access to poorly articulated or unarticulated constructs. Greenberg and

Pascaul-Leone (1995) have recently reissued this call to use the felt sense to gain a fuller understanding of constructs. Bradford, in discussing Gendlin's experiential approach to psychotherapy, points out that fundamental to Gendlin's approach is ". . . the insight that words and concepts emerge from a preconceptual dimension of embodied feeling;" a dimension which is seen as being "primordial to any theoretical vocabulary" (Bradford, 1989, p. 242). Perhaps using the felt sense and an experiential approach can provide a valuable tool for constructivists' use in therapy and assessment. Such an approach may provide access to preverbal and/or superordinate constructs in a way that will promote greater extension and definition of an individual's construct system.

Preverbal Constructs

George Kelly proposed that much of one's construct system is comprised of constructs which have no consistent word symbol, or "preverbal constructs" (Kelly, 1955, pp. 459-61). And, that even when a construct does have a verbal label, the verbalization is only a cognitive symbol of the construct and not the construct itself. Kelly (1955, p.565) argued that constructs which are preverbal may have been devised prior to the individual developing a command of speech, or may have been devised before the capacity for verbal symbolization was present. Expanding

on this concept, Epting (1984, p.18) contends that preverbal constructs may be loosely formulated, new, or may have been formulated prior to the person having command of the use of verbal symbolization.

Mahoney (Neimeyer, R. and Mahoney, M., 1995) speaks of "powerful and mostly nonlinguistic processes of human self-organization," which he and others have termed "Core Ordering Processes." These core ordering processes function in a manner which "render perceptual and experiential order itself and, hence, pattern, meaning, and experienced reality. . ." (Neimeyer, R. and Mahoney, M., 1995, p. 403). It is these core, and often preverbal, constructs which hold particular interest in the pursuit of therapeutic intervention and/or gaining an academic understanding of human personality and change processes.

For the most part, the material dealt with in psychotherapy will center around what is termed role governing core. These are the subset of core constructs which deal with the way we relate to others through establishing role relationships with them. Much of the material here, however may not be well verbalized owing to the early age at which it was established. (Epting, 1984, p. 47)

Developing an awareness and understanding of these core constructs is crucial in the development of a role relationship in which the therapist can subsume the construct system and gain an understanding of the client's construction of experience. Bringing these core constructs to a level of awareness to which they can be symbolically

represented by words, and thus communicated, can be a key component of the therapeutic process.

. . . change usually starts at the preverbal level and the client later becomes articulate in the therapy room . . . There is frequently however a great deal of grappling with the material at a preverbal level before the client can grasp what is going on at the verbal level and thereby truly encounter the change that is taking place.
(Epting, 1984, pp. 111-112)

R. Neimeyer (1995), Liotti (1987), and others note that the classic view of resistance as being a maladaptive barrier to therapeutic change is not the view held by constructivists; instead, constructivists understand "resistance" as the client's attempt to maintain one's core constructs in an effort to maintain the sense of self. Maintaining the core constructs allows the individual to experience a consistency throughout a wide variety of lived experiences and allows the person to utilize a multitude of past experiences in anticipating future perceptions of reality.

From a constructivist perspective, the interpretation of new events, the development of new meanings, and the evolving sense of who one is in the world is built on the foundation of one's core constructs. Many of these core constructs are likely to be composed of constructs formed early in the developmental process and are likely to be preverbal. Given that one sees the world through the lenses of one's own construct system, and that each new

construct is developed through the perspective of the already existing system, it is vital that a therapist gain an understanding of this foundation which is so resistant to change, rather than to simply try to impart a "better" way of being. Even if a clinician were to "succeed" at breaking through the resistance and invalidating a problematic means of thinking about the world, such an imposed dismantling of the core constructs would be likely to throw the client into a phenomenological chaos. This underscores the importance of the therapist becoming familiar with and respecting the core of a client's construct system before attempting to facilitate substantive change.

As of yet, constructivists continue to struggle to gain access to core constructs and little has been done to specifically address those constructs which may be preverbal (Neimeyer, R., 1993). The frustration of not being able to access the core of the construct system during the therapeutic process is demonstrated by a personal journal passage quoted by Robert Neimeyer (Neimeyer, R., 1995, p.232) in which his client "Mandy" described her experience of completing a repertory grid:

The result of my reptest . . . I am disappointed. Reflected is my superficial public self; I could not tap my inner core. As I write this I sense an enmeshment with that inner being . . . the self I have much to learn from. In public, I am separated from it . . . I hide from myself. As I completed the grid in group my inner self begged for more time . . . for a safe place to think and

feel . . . I had none at that moment. I am left with what I know; the grid reflected only what I fed it. I contemplate the separateness of my being. What does it feel like to be whole? (Something in this line has moved me to tears).

Neimeyer went on to cite Yorke's observation that perhaps "it is difficult for meaning to pass through the linguistic constrictions of the grid matrix" (Yorke, 1989, p.65).

In a prior publication, R. Neimeyer presented the use of the stream of conscious technique, an approach similar to Freudian free association, as a means to access more meaningful constructs. In his depiction of a therapy session with "Joan P.," his application of "stream of conscious" is strikingly similar to aspects of Gendlin's Focusing procedure:

. . . We then used some progressive muscle relaxation techniques to induce the streaming state, after which I quietly invited her to begin sharing whatever came to her awareness whenever she was ready to do so. Over several minutes, Joan began by associating first to relationships, then to Gene, then to a strong feeling of anger, and then to a 'knot' in her stomach, at which point she paused. I encouraged her simply to repeat the word knot aloud several times. As she did this, she seemed to become more angry, tensing her fists and feet until she suddenly fell silent. She expressed the feeling of being 'stuck in the knot' and unable to enter it further. I then suggested that she simply allow her mind to wander once again to whatever drew her attention. She relaxed for a moment and then associated to Colorado, horses, riding horses, feeling free, wanting to be free, experiencing herself as not free, imagining herself behind bars, and then returning to anger. . . . (Neimeyer, R., 1993, pp. 93)

Clearly, Neimeyer's creating a calm environment through relaxation, then directing Joan P. to transition between the felt experience of a knot in her stomach to the use of the word "knot," to allow her mind to "wander," accepting various, seemingly unrelated associations, runs parallel to the Focusing movements of Clearing a Space, Felt Sense of the Problem, Finding a Handle, and Resonating.

Neimeyer's depiction of this intervention continued with aspects that led to cognitively incorporating this experience into a fuller understanding of the self. This passage bears striking similarity to the Focusing steps of Asking, and Receiving.

We noted the compelling contrast of her image of herself as locked behind bars versus riding freely on a horse, which seemed to represent a powerful preverbal construct for her. We also described the tightness of the knot and her sense of being entrapped within it. She remarked that a part of her was screaming to get out of this prison and commented that this may have been the part of her that wanted to live. She contrasted this with the part of her that felt trapped, suffering, and wanted to die. Thus our first use of streaming in therapy seemed to yield useful understanding of the constructions that she continued to attach to the incest experience . . . (Neimeyer, R., 1993, pp. 93-4)

This therapeutic episode demonstrates that an intervention similar to Focusing can serve as a powerful tool in gaining access to preverbal constructs and fostering therapeutic insight into levels of meaning previously hidden from cognitive awareness.

Construct Meaningfulness and Superordination

In presenting his Theory of Personal Constructs, Kelly proposed that construct systems are organized in hierarchical systems of superordinate and subordinate constructs.

Organization Corollary: Each person characteristically evolves for his convenience in anticipating events, a construction system embracing ordinal relationships between constructs. (Kelly, 1963, p.56)

Kelly described this ordinal relationship as functioning in a system "composed of complementary superordinate and subordinate relationships" (Kelly, 1963, p.68). At the highest levels of this hierarchy are the core constructs ". . . which govern a person's maintenance processes, . . . those by which he maintains his identity and existence" (Kelly, 1955, p.482). Landfield (1977) notes that the more superordinate a construct is, the more wide ranging are its implications to, and its meaningfulness in, one's processes of anticipating future events.

Constructivists have long sought to gain an understanding of hierarchical ordination and the associated levels of meaningfulness of construct systems. In his 1993 article, Constructivist Approaches to the Measurement of Meaning, R. Neimeyer (1993) reviewed several techniques available to clinicians for gaining a better understanding of a client's construct contents and organization. However,

no single measure has yet been developed which can be viewed as the definitive measure of construct ordination and/or meaningfulness.

As I reported in a previous study (Pittman, 1993), one factor that causes some confusion in this area of study is the lack of clarity regarding the concepts of meaningfulness and superordination.

The terms "meaningfulness" and "superordination" have been used interchangeably to describe one aspect of personal constructs, when they actually describe two separate aspects. In Personal Construct Theory, the term "meaningfulness" is a functional characteristic which denotes the degree of implication a construct has on the rest of the personal construct system; the term "superordination" denotes a structural characteristic of one's personal construct system. Although these terms have been used interchangeably, they are not synonymous. The current state of the research in this area has not yet provided methods for separating these two factors; it is assumed that they are very highly correlated and when one studies meaningfulness, by implication one is studying superordination, and vice-versa. (Pittman, 1993, p.24)

Liotti considered the functional and organizational aspects to represent "two sides of the same coin" (Liotti, 1987, p.92). Thus, for the purpose of the current study, measures of ordination will be assumed to imply meaningfulness, and measures of meaningfulness will be assumed to imply ordination.

One of the few studies to directly compare measures of ordination/meaningfulness was conducted by Metzler and G. Neimeyer (1988). They compared six different measures of

ordination applied to vocational hierarchies. Metzler and G. Neimeyer reported that Cochran's Implicit Measure and a Total Variance measure accounted for the most variance among the measures of ordination in their study of vocational hierarchies. The Implicit Measure was produced by the level of correlation between ratings of provided vocational constructs and a rank ordering of vocational preferences. These measures were followed by Explicit (a subject generated rank ordering) and the Extremity score. Metzler and G. Neimeyer concluded that the Implicit measure and Total Variance measures are the best omnibus measures of ordination. They cautioned however that these various methods may measure different facets of construct ordination; thus they advise the utilization of multiple measures.

As I have noted previously (Pittman, 1993), the two strongest measures identified by Metzler and G. Neimeyer, Implicit and Total Variance, are measures which are dependent upon the constructs being measured falling within a unidimensional system, such as vocational choices. However, when constructs are elicited without being artificially limited to a unidimensional construct subsystem, there is a strong likelihood that the elicited constructs will have a low degree of intercorrelation. This is predicted by Kelly's Fragmentation Corollary: "A person may successively employ a variety of construction subsystems

which are inferentially incompatible with each other" (Kelly, 1963, p.83). Thus it follows that the Implicit and Total Variance measures are not appropriate measures of superordination/meaningfulness when the construct system being examined is multidimensional, as is the case when constructs are not limited to a given topic.

It can also be argued that the Explicit rating, which is a subject generated rank-ordering according to importance or meaningfulness, does not adequately accommodate the multi dimensionality of unfettered construct elicitation. The act of rank ordering imposes a linear relationship with one construct, by definition being either more or less meaningful than the other elicited constructs. However, with the multi dimensionality predicted by the Fragmentation Corollary, one could have multiple constructs at similar levels of superordination which would have no direct relationship upon one-another. Therefore, it would seem reasonable to modify the Explicit measure in such a way that the individual can subjectively rate the level of importance/meaningfulness and accommodate the multi-dimensionality of one's construct system. It appears that a Likert type rating which does not force the ratings into a linear arrangement would accomplish this task.

The third measure noted by Metzler and G. Neimeyer, extremity, was first reported by Landfield (1965, 1968). He found that when subjects are asked to rate persons

(elements) as to the degree they are like either end of a bipolar construct (e.g., happy - sad), they tend to make their ratings more toward the extreme ends of the scale if the construct is a more meaningful construct in their construct system. Mancuso and Eimer (1982) proposed the following explanation for this pattern:

. . . when a judge uses a construct as a bipolar rating scale he would think of the extreme ends of the constructs as the location of the prototype. . . we would expect that the familiar persons might be prototypical persons. Thus, in this case, as in other studies of meaningfulness and range, one could conclude that meaningfulness is associated with the availability of prototypes. If the features that define a construct are clearly organized in the judge's system, he will be more likely to have available a prototype against which to contrast the range of events that might be proximate to that prototype. (p.147)

The extremity of one's ratings on a construct is measured by the absolute value of the deviations of the ratings from the midpoint of the scale (Mitterer & Adams-Webber, 1988). By simultaneously using the extremity of ratings and a Likert type importance-rating of construct meaningfulness, one should be able to obtain an indication of subjects' construct system ordination. That is to say, these measures should give an indication as to the level of construct meaningfulness represented in the particular sample of constructs elicited from the participants.

An additional feature that has been noted in studies of construct meaningfulness is that constructs that are elicited early in the repertory grid procedure tend to be

rated as more meaningful and have higher extremity scores than constructs elicited late in the elicitation process. McDonagh and Adams-Webber (1987) found that constructs elicited early in a repertory grid elicitation tend to be more meaningful and have greater implications than constructs elicited toward the end of the procedure.

Arguments for an Experiential Constructivism

In the recently published Constructivism in Psychotherapy (R. Neimeyer & M. Mahoney, Eds., 1995), there are multiple calls by various authors to take constructivist psychology toward a more experiential direction. However, there has always been an interest in the role that experience plays in construction processes; as Feixas notes (1995, p. 315), "For Kelly (1955), the process of experience was an intrinsic part of being human, and, therefore, he was not concerned with explaining its causes and motives - the why. Rather, he proposed to consider this very process as the most fundamental mechanism of change and evolution."

Despite Kelly's early acknowledgment of the primacy of experience, constructivists' embrace of the role moment-to-moment experience plays in psychological processes is today, some forty years later, still in its infancy. In discussing the future of constructivism, Mahoney writes,

One of the most difficult challenges facing the constructivist counselor involves the act of practicing psychotherapy in a way that respects what Hayek(1978) has termed 'the primacy of the abstract' - that is, the extent to which the most basic and important human processes of organizing our moment-to-moment experience operate at levels far beyond what we consider conscious awareness. (Mahoney, 1995 a, p.389)

It is this challenge which contemporary theorists are beginning to address.

There is a growing recognition of the validity of alternate forms of knowledge and/or awareness that are not part and parcel of language based cognitive awareness. R. Neimeyer comments, ". . . human affective experience is infused with significance and can itself be viewed as a refined form of knowing" (1995 c, p.2). The difficulty lies in being able to work with this alternate level of awareness in a therapeutic venue given the difficulty of translating this lived experience into the verbal commerce of cognitive interchange and therapeutic interventions, ". . . human beings are denied any direct access to an immediate reality beyond language, defined broadly as the entire repertory of symbolic utterances and actions afforded us by our culture . . ." (R. Neimeyer, 1995 a, p.15). R. Neimeyer (1995 a, p.18) goes on to proclaim that this struggle to translate clients' difficulties into symbolic communication is at the core of the therapeutic endeavor, "Ultimately, the aim of therapy is to create a personal and interpersonal atmosphere in which presenting problems can be reformulated and

resolved in language and in which clients can recruit social validation for new, less 'problem-saturated' identities."

Various authors (Mahoney, 1995 b; Guidano, 1995 a & b; Greenberg & Pascual-Leone, 1995) propose that the development of strategies to enhance phenomenological awareness and subsequent symbolization of that awareness may provide an avenue to more effective psychological interventions. In his discussion of the future directions and challenges of constructivist therapies, Mahoney cites as an area for further development, "Issues of embodiment - the bodily context that affords all forms of experiencing - will become increasingly central to therapeutic relevance; that is, embodied therapies will fare better than those therapies that are relatively disembodied . . ." (Mahoney, 1995 b, p.55).

Guidano argues that constructivists need to make a concerted effort with their clients to develop skills to become more aware of their moment-to-moment experiences.

Self-observation provides the raw materials that are necessary in the attempted reconstruction of events of therapeutic interest, working at the interface between immediate experiencing and symbolic explaining. It permits the exploration and analysis of three levels of processing: immediate awareness, mediated explanations, and the dynamic and ever-developing relationship between these basic contrasts. (Guidano, 1995 a, p.155)

Guidano argues for the primacy of experience as being the means by which persons perceive being in their environment. As such, experiential awareness is not subject

to error; rather errors in knowledge occur only in the translation of these experiences into cognitive symbolism.

Human experience, therefore, appears as the emerging product of a process of mutual regulation continuously alternating between experiencing and explaining - that is, a process in which ongoing patterns of activity (immediate experience) become subject to linguistic distinctions and are reordered in terms of symbolic propositions distributed across conceptual networks. . . . affective-emotional activity corresponds to and depends on immediate and irrefutable apprehensions of the world. Hence, from a purely ontological point of view, feelings can never be "mistaken." It is through feelings that we experience our way of being in the world. . . . At the level of immediate experiencing, it is not possible to distinguish between perception and illusion. . . . Only by shifting to the level of "languaging" can the individual explain the felt experience in a variety of alternative manners, such as its having been a trick of light or an illusion, thereby making the experience consistent with his or her current appraisal of the world. In other words, errors can be noticed only *a posteriori* (after the experience) and depend on the point of view that we, as observers, take in reordering our experiencing. All rational-cognitive reordering involves expanding the coherence of symbolic rules to make the flow of immediate experience more consistent with the continuity of one's current appraisal of the world.

Rather than representing an already given reality according to a logic of external correspondence, knowledge is the continuous construction and reconstruction of a world by the ordering individual in an attempt to make ongoing experiences consistent. (Guidano, 1995 a, p.95)

It is that crucial interchange between immediate experiencing and explicit verbalization that is fecund for revision of one's construct system (Guidano, 1995 b). Guidano proposes that the basic procedure for assisting clients with construct revisions "consists of training

clients, through methods of self-observation, to differentiate between immediate self-perception and conscious beliefs and attitudes, and then to reconstruct the patterns of coherence that they use to maintain consistency with their feelings" (Guidano, 1995 b, p.102).

This task requires concerted effort given that experiential awareness can exist "in consciousness independently of cognition" (Guidano, 1995 b, p.102). And, when the immediate experience is not translated into symbolic cognitions, it is realized as physiologic manifestations (Guidano, 1995 b). These physiologic manifestations may not be comprehended as an element of knowledge about one's being in the world, but may instead be interpreted as "an externally bound perturbation to the extent that it does not fit with the range of decodability allowed by his or her current patterns of coherence" (Guidano, 1995 b, p.104).

This attempt to integrate the dynamic interplay of phenomenological and cognitive knowing into the understanding of psychological process dictates the modification of models of thinking in general, and of construct generation/elaboration in particular. Greenberg and Pascual-Leone amend the definition of "meaning" to incorporate this phenomenological-cognitive interplay.

Meaning, we argue is neither simply imposed on experience by language nor wholly contained in experience but, rather, is generated by a dialectical construction. This construction is

continually guided by an implicit 'felt sense' (Gendlin, 1964), which itself results from an automatic, dynamic synthesis of the individual's internal complexity . . . A crucial part of the meaning-making process, however, is the making of linguistic distinctions to express this implicit bodily felt sense of meaning. Experience is not simply 'in' us, fully formed; rather, we need to put words to our feeling to bring them to full awareness. (Greenberg & Pascual-Leone, 1995, pp.170-1)

As noted by Greenberg and Pascual-Leone in the above statement, Eugene Gendlin's work provides a vehicle to pursue an understanding of the dialectical interplay between phenomenology and symbolic cognition.

Rationale for the Present Study

It appears that one of the prime areas for exploration in constructivist theory is the study and development of experiential approaches to psychotherapy and assessment. The work of prior body oriented clinicians, such as practitioners of Gestalt and Bioenergetics approaches, has demonstrated that working with clients on a body experience level can produce significant psychotherapeutic results.

Gendlin's Focusing Oriented approach to psychotherapy provides a means to teach clients or research participants to attend to their body and emotional experience, to combine that experience with cognitive awareness, and to translate the sum of the experiential awareness and cognitive

awareness into language. Translating awareness into language provides a vehicle for clients and clinicians to communicate and explore the construct system one uses to anticipate life events. By providing such a vehicle, Gendlin's Focusing technique may lead to more fully elaborated constructs in the assessment process and may hold broad implications for construct system revision in psychotherapy.

Specifically, this experiment is designed to test if using a modified form of the Focusing procedure will enable experiment participants to access a more experientially informed level of awareness of their personal constructs. Will using a Focusing elicitation procedure cause clients to produce more meaningful constructs on a repertory grid assessment instrument? If so, then the increased meaningfulness should be reflected in the meaningfulness measures, extremity and importance rating, that the participants indicate on their grid forms. Additionally, since Focusing tends to lead to progressively higher levels of awareness, participants may be likely to produce more meaningful constructs in latter trials, instead of the more typical pattern of producing less meaningful constructs in latter trials.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Using the Focusing procedure during construct elicitation yields constructs that are more meaningful than constructs elicited using standard elicitation procedures. This would result in subjects' ratings across multiple trials on the repertory grids to reflect higher ratings of meaningfulness and higher extremity scores, on average, for subjects using an experiential approach to construct elicitation than for subjects using standard, nonexperiential, elicitation procedures.

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in participants' measures of meaningfulness between constructs elicited using an experiential procedure and constructs elicited using standard, nonexperiential, elicitations.

Hypothesis 2: Given the progressive nature of Focusing, constructs elicited by using Focusing will tend to be rated as more meaningful in later elicitations than in earlier elicitations. This would result in subjects' importance-ratings and extremity scores on the repertory grids indicating, on average, that meaningfulness of elicited constructs increases across trials for the Focusing group, while a decline in meaningfulness across trials will be noted for the control groups.

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in patterns of meaningfulness across trials noted between the Focusing and Control groups.

CHAPTER III METHOD

Preliminary Study

A separate preliminary study (conducted by Kaia Calbeck and Stephen Pittman) was conducted to investigate the variance in levels of meaningfulness which may be associated with the triadic sorts, groupings of three persons the individual personally knows, used in construct elicitation during the repertory grid procedure. The results of the preliminary study have not been published.

Seventy University of Florida undergraduates (52 females and 18 males) completed repertory grids which contained 20 role descriptions of persons known to the subject (e.g., closest same gender friend). The persons named by the participants as fitting these role descriptors were then used as elements in the repertory grid. The 20 elements were grouped into 4 types of triadic sorts: triads in which one element was "self;" triads in which at least one element was "family;" triads containing "self and family;" and "other" (triads containing neither "self" nor "family"). (Note: The triadic sort "types" component of

the study was conducted to investigate factors not directly related to the present study). Twenty triadic sorts were presented in a systematically varied order.

After the constructs were elicited and ratings completed, arithmetic means were calculated for two measures of meaningfulness, extremity and a rank-ordering score (ordering the constructs from most meaningful to least meaningful). There were no significant differences in extremity scores noted for types of triadic sorts, but on the rank-ordering measure, the "other" (containing neither self nor family) triadic sorts were ranked significantly lower (more meaningful) than any of the remaining three types of sorts. The means of these measures are presented in Appendix A.

In an effort to reduce the error variance attributed to the triadic sorts in the Pittman 1993 study, a sample of twelve triadic sorts which produced similar levels of meaningfulness measures were selected for use in the repertory grid for the present study. Triadic sorts which fell within one standard deviation of the mean on both the extremity and rank order dependent variables were selected. This selection process produced nine triadic sorts. Since twelve trials were desired (to allow for evidence in an increase or decrease in meaningfulness across trials), three additional triadic sorts were selected which were within

0.25 standard deviations of the mean on either one of the two measures. A total of twelve triadic sorts were selected, which were comprised of seventeen different role elements.

Subjects

For the present study, forty-two undergraduate General Psychology students were drawn from the University of Florida Psychology subject pool. Half of the participants were females, and half were males. Equal numbers of males and females participated in each experimental condition. Students who participated in the experiment received credit toward completion of class requirements for their General Psychology course. There was no other compensation. Participants were unaware of the nature of the experiment when signing up to participate.

Materials

Each participant was provided with the following: one repertory grid (Appendix B) and one pen. The experimenter showed the subject a construct meaningfulness rating scale (Appendix C).

Repertory grid

The grid for the current experiment consists of a vertical listing of seventeen roles (e.g., "closest same

gender friend") to which each subject assigns the name of someone the subject personally knows who fits that particular role. The names of the persons fitting the role titles comprise the elements of the repertory grid. Accompanying the listing of roles are twelve pages; at the top of each page is a triadic sort identifying three of the elements and lines on the left and right side for the subject to write both poles of a construct. Each page also depicts seventeen Likert type scales (one for each element). The scales have twelve points and appear as follows:

6 5 4 3 2 1 1 2 3 4 5 6.

See Appendix B for the repertory grid instrument.

This instrument was utilized to elicit bi-polar constructs and to gather measures of meaningfulness for the elicited constructs.

Measures of Meaningfulness

Importance Rating Score.

The participants were asked to rate each of the constructs on a scale of 1-12 according to "how meaningful or how important" each construct is in their system of understanding themselves and others. Participants were shown a construct importance rating scale as a visual aid (see Appendix C). A rating of "1" denotes a minimally

important/meaningful construct, and a "12" denotes a very important/meaningful construct. This measure differs from the rank-order "self-rating" measure used in the pilot study in that a rank-order measure assumes a linear relationship in the level of meaningfulness between constructs, whereas this independent rating of meaningfulness does not require such an assumption. Twelve rating points were available in order to allow the participants to rate the 12 constructs in a linear fashion if they so chose. Additionally, a rank order variable, being an ordinal variable, does not allow the use of parametric statistics for analysis, whereas the Likert type rating used in this experiment does permit the use of parametric statistics.

Extremity Scores.

The extremity score for each construct represents the sum of the ratings for each of the seventeen elements on the twelve point Likert scale for each trial.

Procedure

Each experiment session was conducted in a single two hour block. Each subject took part in the experiment under one of three conditions: standard elicitation (control group), guided imagery elicitation (control group), and

Focusing elicitation (experimental group). The experimenter met with each subject individually.

At the beginning of the experiment, the participants were told, "The following procedure is designed to investigate ways of tapping into a person's self awareness." Participants provided basic demographic data on the instrument. Each student then wrote the name of persons he/she personally knows who fit the role for each of the seventeen role titles on the grid form. They were allowed to use any one individual for one and only one role.

Construct Elicitation Procedures

All participants were exposed to the same intervention during the first trial. The experimenter directed each subject to elicit the first construct using the standard triadic elicitation procedure as described below. The first trial was utilized to teach all participants how to complete the repertory grid. This also allowed the experimenter to utilize the meaningfulness measures produced in the first trial to examine homogeneity between the three groups.

Standard triadic elicitation

In the triadic elicitation procedure, participants were told to consider three of the people (triadic sorts preselected by the experimenter) they listed. In the first

trial, participants were to consider the persons they listed as fitting roles identified as B, F, and G on the grid form (mother, romantic partner, and former romantic partner). Participants were then instructed to think of a way two of those three people are alike that is different from the other person, and to write a word or phrase that describes this characteristic. Next, the participants wrote a word or phrase which they considered to be the opposite of this characteristic. The set of opposite descriptors that were produced by the subject are considered to represent a bipolar construct which that person utilizes.

Following the elicitation of each bipolar construct, the participants then rated each of the elements (persons they listed as matching the role titles) on a twelve point Likert scale according to which pole of the construct describes that particular person, and to what degree. A rating toward the extreme ends of the scale indicates the person is considered by the subject to be very much like that pole of the construct, while a rating toward the middle of the scale would indicate that the person is considered to be less like that pole of the construct. After rating each element (person), the subject then assigned an importance rating score (described above) to indicate the subjective

level of importance of that construct. Each subject then completed the remainder of the repertory grid under one of the three experiment conditions.

The standard elicitation control group continued to complete the repertory grid under standard triadic elicitation procedures as described above; the experimenter was available to answer questions and to provide instructional assistance when needed, but otherwise remained present without having further interaction with the subject.

Guided imagery elicitation

The guided imagery control group is designed to provide participants with a level of interaction with the experimenter that is similar to that which was experienced by participants in the experimental (Focusing) group. Participants in the Guided Imagery group were instructed to imagine taking a trip to a beach throughout the elicitation process. This procedure also provided the participants in this group ample opportunities to attend to the experiential aspects of their imagined trip (sights, sounds, smells, touch). However, they were not instructed to attend to these experiential components. Starting with the second trial, prior to considering the three-person triadic sort, the subject was instructed to imagine a specific component

of taking a trip to the beach. Following each guided imagery intervention, the participant completed one trial of the repertory grid.

Guided imagery instructions

Trial 2: I want you to imagine that you are going to take a day trip to the beach. Throughout the rest of the experiment, I will guide you through different parts of the trip. Feel free to close your eyes if that helps you to imagine the trip. Also, feel free to tell me about your imagined trip, or, if you prefer, you can keep your imagined trip completely private (the experimenter may briefly talk with the participant in a polite but non-instructive manner in order to facilitate rapport if the participant chooses to share aspects of the imagined trip). Now, I want you to imagine that you are talking with your friends, family, and/or your romantic partner while planning a trip to the beach. Take a few minutes, or longer, to imagine this scene and let me know when you are ready to proceed.

Trial 3: Now imagine that you are getting ready for the trip, packing towels, food, drinks, selecting swim

wear, packing the car, and starting on the trip.

Imagine this for a while and tell me when you are ready to go on.

Trial 4: This time, imagine the drive to the beach, the places you will drive through, what you will do to pass the time in the car, and finally, arriving at the beach.

Trial 5: Imagine that you have arrived at the beach. Now, you are selecting your spot to set up for the day. Think about what all you are considering when deciding where to set up. Do you use a chair or a towel? Do you listen to a radio or to the sound of the ocean? Make sure everything is set, just the way you like it.

Trial 6: Imagine playing on the beach. You're not ready to go into the water yet. Think about the things you like to do on the sand.

Trial 7: Now imagine yourself going into the water. Some people like to wade among the waves; some swim vigorously; some like to surf. Think about the ways you like to play in or along the water.

Trial 8: Now, you're on the beach, and you decide it's time to eat. What types of food and drink did you

bring? Think about how eating at the beach is different from eating at home. Take some time to enjoy this part of your day.

Trial 9: Now that you have spent time playing on the beach and in the water, imagine taking some time to relax. Perhaps you would like to lay there soaking up some sun, maybe reading, or perhaps a nice relaxing stroll along the water's edge.

Trial 10: Unfortunately, it is starting to get late, and it is time to pack up to head back home. What all do you have to do? How is this different from when you were packing earlier in the day to go to the beach? Do you leave the beach in a hurry, or do you linger?

Trial 11: Now imagine the drive back home. How is this drive different from the drive to the beach? Do you pass the time the same way?

Trial 12: Imagine that you have arrived back home after your trip to the beach. Picture yourself unloading your things from the car. What will you and the people who went with you do now? Think about what this day at the beach has been like for you.

Each subject was allowed up to six minutes to imagine each phase of the guided imagery beach trip. Following each guided imagery intervention, the subject completed a trial of the repertory grid using standard repertory grid procedure (i.e., consider the triadic sort, elicit one pole of the construct, elicit the opposite construct pole, rate the elements, and rate the level of construct meaningfulness).

Focusing elicitation

The Focusing group was used to test the effect of teaching participants to attend to their experiential phenomena while completing the repertory grid. The training in attending to experiential phenomena is based on Eugene Gendlin's Focusing technique. The experimental group was taught a modified form of the Focusing technique. The participants utilized the Focusing technique in conjunction with the triadic construct elicitation procedure.

Focusing instructions

Trial 2: Many times we experience more about a person or a situation than we are able to put into words, like when watching a beautiful sunset or looking into the face of a loved one. By paying attention to

how you respond, not only intellectually, but also physically and emotionally, you can capture more of what it is you know about an experience. When one attends to all levels of awareness, it becomes easier to more fully understand the experience and to put what you know about that person or situation into words.

Usually, we do not take the time or make an effort to attend beyond our intellectual response. I am now going to teach you a way to listen to your total experience and to put that experience into words. Start by getting into a comfortable position by sitting up straight with your feet flat on the floor. Breathe deeply and pay attention to how your body feels. Many people find that this is easier to do if they close their eyes. You may close your eyes or leave them open, whichever feels right for you. Throughout the rest of the exercise, you may find it helpful to talk about what you are experiencing, but please feel free to not share anything which you prefer to keep private.

Notice how your body is feeling, perhaps tense, relaxed, tired, or maybe energized (Pause 30 seconds).

Pay attention to what emotions you are feeling. For example, you may notice sadness, happiness, anger, boredom, or any number of emotions (Pause 30 seconds).

Continue paying attention to your body and your emotions and say to yourself, "everything in my life is perfect just the way it is." (Pause 20 seconds).

Instead of responding to this statement by saying what is not perfect, just passively notice how your entire awareness responds. Notice what things come up for you as not "perfect." (Pause 20 seconds).

Notice that these things will come up into your awareness without you even trying to think about them. Do not try to figure them out or explain them. Just acknowledge that those things that are not "perfect" are there.

Imagine that you have placed each of those "not perfect" things in a container, perhaps a box,

and that you can step back from them and look at each one of them. For example, if one of my "not perfect" things is "not having enough money," I would place that in a box and back away from my money worries for the time being. Observe each of your "not perfects." You do not need to worry about these things right now. Give yourself permission to set them aside for now. Some people find it helpful to say to each of these things something like, "I know you are there. I have not forgotten about you. But, I am going to deal with something else right now." (Pause 20 seconds).

Feel free to talk about this process, or to be as private as you would like. Let me know when you are a comfortable distance from those "not perfect" things. If you need any assistance now, or throughout the experiment, just let me know. (Wait up to three minutes - if participant takes longer than three minutes, assist the participant in achieving a comfortable distance.)

This process you just went through, where you set aside those concerns that are pressing upon you, we call "clearing a space." You will be asked

to "clear a space" several times throughout the rest of the experiment; remember that anytime you are clearing a space, you can simply acknowledge whatever comes up for you and set it aside at a comfortable distance. Notice how it feels to have everything set aside. Now you are ready to attend to whatever experience presents itself to you.

Now, look at the three letters noted at the top of page two. Think of the three people whose names you have written next to letters A, H, and K. Just as you passively allowed the "not perfect" things to come into your awareness, passively allow your experience of each of these people to come into your awareness. Take a couple of minutes to experience your awareness of each of these persons as if you were observing each from a comfortable distance. Pay attention to any emotions or physical feelings that come up for you while you are observing. Let me know when you are ready to proceed. (Allow up to three minutes.)

Now, think of a way in which two of these people are similar which is different from the other person. Again, take a passive approach and

allow a word or group of words to come up for you that captures this difference. (Pause one minute). As these words come up, check to see if they capture your experience of these people. When you find the words that capture your experience, you may notice that it feels right, like the word "fits" what it is you know in your thoughts, emotions, and body about these people. If a word you are attempting to use doesn't feel right, pay attention to how it doesn't feel right, then let it go and allow another word to come up for you. When you find the right words, you may even notice that your experience of these people shifts a little as you capture your awareness in words. When you feel you have determined how two of these people are alike and different from the other, and found the right word or words for this difference, write the word on your form. (Allow up to three minutes).
(End of Focusing intervention for trial two).

The participants then wrote a word or words that describes the opposite pole of the construct and completed the ratings of the elements and the construct meaningfulness

rating in the same manner as participants in the control groups.

Trials 3-4: For these elicitations, Focusing Elicitation participants were asked to "clear a space" in preparation for considering the triadic sort for the trial. Then the participant considered the three persons called for in the triadic sort using a Focusing approach as in trial two.

Participants were instructed to observe their experiential awareness of the three persons, to allow a word or words that describes a way in which two of the persons are alike and different from the other to come up from the experience, to check the fit of the word or words against the felt sense, and to modify the word as needed. Specific time limits were observed for the phases of the Focusing elicitation: clearing a space = thirty seconds; observing the three persons = two minutes; coming up with a word\words that describes the difference = one minute; checking the fit and/or modifying the word/words = two minutes. This results in a maximum elicitation time of six and one half minutes per trial for trials three and four.

After the fourth trial, participants were asked to proceed through the remaining Focusing elicitation trials at their own pace without further instruction. They were reminded to make sure to complete each phase of the Focusing elicitation for each trial. Additional instruction or interaction was provided by the experimenter if the participant appeared to be having difficulty or requested assistance, or if the participant initiated conversation. After the bipolar construct was elicited for each trial, the participant completed the element and meaningfulness ratings for that bipolar construct.

Additional interventions for Focusing elicitation trials

The experimenter assisted the participants with the Focusing elicitation if warranted by the participants' requests or notable difficulty in completing the task. If the participant chose to talk with the experimenter about the content or process of the Focusing elicitation, the experimenter assisted with the Focusing procedure in a manner consistent with Eugene Gendlin's technique. Specifically, the experimenter assisted the participant by way of instruction in attending to bodily and emotional awareness, maintaining a sense of separation from the object

of the Focusing (persons being considered), attending to the felt sense of the persons, and using experiential awareness to judge if the words chosen captured the quality of the participant's experience. In keeping with the highly individualized nature of the Focusing procedure, the exact content of these interventions were idiosyncratic to the individual participant.

At the conclusion of the experiment all participants were debriefed and given an opportunity to ask questions.

CHAPTER IV RESULTS

The data was arranged in a 2 X 3 X 12 design with repeated measures. The independent variables were A) sex, B) elicitation procedure (Standard, Imagery, or Focusing), and C) trial. The dependent variables were A) extremity score and B) importance rating (participants' rating of construct importance or meaningfulness). The alpha level for a priori tests of statistical significance was set at $p \leq 0.05$.

Statistical Analyses Design

A "split-plot" design (Kennedy & Bush, 1985, p. 417) was utilized to accommodate an examination of between group variance using within-subject measures (also known as "repeated measures"). Extremity scores and importance rating scores were analyzed independently using a split-plot analysis of variance (ANOVA). The ANOVA was utilized to look for main effects for the Elicitation Procedure, Sex, and Trial and/or any interaction between these factors. The

results of these analyses were utilized to test the two hypotheses: Hypothesis 1 - Using the Focusing procedure during construct elicitation yields constructs that are more meaningful than constructs elicited using standard triadic elicitation procedures; Hypothesis 2 - Constructs elicited using Focusing will tend to be progressively more meaningful as more constructs are elicited across repeated measures.

Results Of Statistical Analyses

Tests of Hypothesis 1

Results using extremity score. The ANOVA testing Hypothesis 1 using the extremity score (displayed in Table 1) indicated a statistically significant three way interaction between the variables Elicitation, Sex, and Trial. As noted earlier, the extremity score for each trial is the sum of all the Likert-type ratings the participant provided in reference to each element (person) for a construct. Means and standard deviations were calculated for the extremity scores and are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2 contains the mean extremity scores broken down by elicitation, sex, and trial. Since the raw extremity score (sum of all element ratings per trial) does not easily illustrate the participants' tendency to rate elements

Table 1.

ANOVA for Elicitation, Sex, and Trial main effects and interactions using extremity for Hypothesis 1

<u>Source</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
Within + Residual	36	1136.49	.28	.761
Elicitation	2	312.54	.36	.553
Sex	1	408.47	.96	.393
Elicitation X Sex	2	1088.68	.96	.393
Within + Residual	360	83.33		
Trial	10	96.29	1.16	.320
Elicitation X Trial	20	61.04	.73	.792
Sex X Trial	10	47.09	.577	.842
Elicitation X Sex X Trial	20	165.93	1.99	.007 *

* $p \leq .05$

toward the extreme ends of the bipolar construct, the "average" extremity ratings were calculated by dividing the extremity score for each trial by the number of elements rated in each trial (17). For illustrative purposes, Table 3 depicts these average extremity ratings, and all graphs featuring extremity ratings utilize average extremity scores. A graph depicting these average extremity scores by elicitation, sex, and trial is shown in Figure 1. However, as in the statistical results of the first analysis, this does not present a clear picture of the interaction.

Table 2.

Extremity Scores: Elicitation X Sex X Trial

Trial	<u>Standard</u>		<u>Imagery</u>		<u>Focusing</u>	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
1: all	<u>72.07</u>	<u>15.13</u>	<u>70.29</u>	<u>12.43</u>	<u>67.93</u>	<u>11.51</u>
female	75.29	13.82	69.75	15.49	67.71	13.46
male	68.71	16.73	71.00	8.05	68.14	10.29
2: all	<u>69.85</u>	<u>11.38</u>	<u>67.71</u>	<u>5.12</u>	<u>63.71</u>	<u>11.73</u>
female	71.00	12.68	67.75	6.63	63.43	10.60
male	68.71	10.81	67.67	2.58	64.00	13.63
3: all	<u>72.14</u>	<u>18.43</u>	<u>70.43</u>	<u>9.35</u>	<u>68.93</u>	<u>14.71</u>
female	74.43	10.97	65.88	9.86	69.86	13.47
male	69.86	24.57	76.50	3.72	68.00	16.88
4: all	<u>68.79</u>	<u>16.55</u>	<u>65.50</u>	<u>9.78</u>	<u>65.93</u>	<u>16.05</u>
female	73.14	14.17	66.63	5.80	66.00	15.55
male	64.43	18.67	64.00	14.03	65.86	17.79
5: all	<u>69.14</u>	<u>13.36</u>	<u>65.79</u>	<u>8.18</u>	<u>65.36</u>	<u>12.07</u>
female	72.71	14.94	64.25	9.00	66.71	15.29
male	65.57	11.57	67.83	7.17	64.00	8.79
6: all	<u>63.50</u>	<u>18.31</u>	<u>67.07</u>	<u>8.74</u>	<u>67.21</u>	<u>11.91</u>
female	68.14	16.04	70.38	7.76	63.86	9.12
male	58.86	20.47	62.67	8.59	70.57	14.07
7: all	<u>66.93</u>	<u>16.10</u>	<u>67.21</u>	<u>10.04</u>	<u>67.29</u>	<u>14.10</u>
female	72.71	11.29	70.88	8.81	64.57	15.76
male	61.14	18.86	62.33	10.17	70.00	14.90

Table 2--continued

Trial	<u>Standard</u>		<u>Imagery</u>		<u>Focusing</u>	
	x	SD	x	SD	x	SD
8: all	<u>66.93</u>	<u>18.34</u>	<u>65.14</u>	<u>9.98</u>	<u>64.57</u>	<u>17.27</u>
female	74.56	16.68	67.00	7.91	60.43	17.66
male	59.00	17.44	62.67	12.60	68.71	17.15
9: all	<u>68.64</u>	<u>16.37</u>	<u>66.00</u>	<u>8.93</u>	<u>67.86</u>	<u>16.93</u>
female	67.29	18.24	67.00	5.42	68.86	21.22
male	70.00	15.61	64.67	12.74	66.86	12.98
10:all	<u>71.00</u>	<u>16.08</u>	<u>71.86</u>	<u>11.19</u>	<u>65.07</u>	<u>11.53</u>
female	76.14	14.69	74.25	8.14	61.86	13.83
male	65.85	16.81	68.67	14.54	68.29	8.53
11:all	<u>72.50</u>	<u>14.41</u>	<u>67.43</u>	<u>12.14</u>	<u>63.93</u>	<u>11.82</u>
female	79.43	12.61	62.75	12.33	61.00	13.22
male	65.57	13.39	73.67	9.44	66.86	10.40
12:all	<u>66.07</u>	<u>15.10</u>	<u>69.00</u>	<u>10.03</u>	<u>64.57</u>	<u>11.91</u>
female	69.57	16.21	64.00	9.01	67.86	11.55
male	62.57	14.25	75.67	7.39	61.29	12.19
Mean of trials 2 though 12:						
all	<u>68.68</u>	<u>15.50</u>	<u>67.59</u>	<u>8.80</u>	<u>65.84</u>	<u>13.84</u>
female	72.68	14.41	67.34	8.24	64.95	14.30
male	64.69	16.59	67.85	9.36	66.77	13.39
Mean of all 12 trials:						
all	<u>68.96</u>	<u>15.79</u>	<u>67.79</u>	<u>9.66</u>	<u>66.03</u>	<u>13.46</u>
female	72.89	14.36	67.57	8.85	65.18	14.23
male	65.02	16.60	68.11	9.25	66.88	13.13

Table 3.

Average extremity score per Element: Elicitation X Sex X Trial

Trial	<u>Standard</u>		<u>Imagery</u>		<u>Focusing</u>	
	<u>\bar{x}</u>	SD	<u>\bar{x}</u>	SD	<u>\bar{x}</u>	SD
1: all	<u>4.12</u>	.89	<u>4.13</u>	.73	<u>3.10</u>	.68
female	4.43	.81	4.10	.91	3.98	.79
male	4.04	.98	4.17	.47	4.01	.61
2: all	<u>4.11</u>	.67	<u>3.98</u>	.30	<u>3.75</u>	.69
female	4.18	.74	3.99	.39	3.73	.62
male	4.04	.63	3.98	.15	3.76	.80
3: all	<u>4.24</u>	1.08	<u>4.14</u>	.55	<u>4.05</u>	.86
female	4.38	.65	3.88	.58	4.11	.79
male	4.11	1.45	4.50	.22	4.00	.99
4: all	<u>4.05</u>	.97	<u>3.85</u>	.57	<u>3.88</u>	.94
female	4.30	.83	3.92	.34	3.88	.91
male	3.79	1.10	3.76	.83	3.87	1.05
5: all	<u>4.07</u>	.79	<u>3.87</u>	.48	<u>3.84</u>	.71
female	4.28	.88	3.78	.53	3.92	.90
male	3.86	.68	3.99	.42	3.76	.52
6: all	<u>3.73</u>	1.07	<u>3.95</u>	.51	<u>3.95</u>	.70
female	4.01	.94	4.14	.46	3.76	.54
male	3.46	1.20	3.69	.51	4.15	.83
7: all	<u>3.94</u>	.95	<u>3.95</u>	.59	<u>3.96</u>	.88
female	4.28	.66	4.17	.52	3.80	.93
male	3.60	1.11	3.67	.60	4.12	.88

Table 3--continued

Trial	Standard		Imagery		Focusing	
	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD
8: all	<u>3.94</u>	<u>1.08</u>	<u>3.83</u>	<u>.58</u>	<u>3.80</u>	<u>1.02</u>
female	4.40	.98	3.94	.47	3.56	1.04
male	3.47	1.03	3.69	.74	4.04	1.01
9: all	<u>4.04</u>	<u>.96</u>	<u>3.88</u>	<u>.53</u>	<u>3.99</u>	<u>.10</u>
female	3.96	1.07	3.94	.32	4.05	1.25
male	4.12	.92	3.80	.75	3.93	.76
10:all	<u>4.18</u>	<u>.95</u>	<u>4.23</u>	<u>.66</u>	<u>3.83</u>	<u>.68</u>
female	4.48	.86	4.37	.48	3.64	.81
male	3.87	.99	4.04	.86	4.02	.50
11:all	<u>4.26</u>	<u>.85</u>	<u>3.97</u>	<u>.71</u>	<u>3.76</u>	<u>.70</u>
female	4.67	.74	3.69	.73	3.59	.78
male	3.86	.79	4.33	.55	3.93	.61
12:all	<u>3.89</u>	<u>.89</u>	<u>4.06</u>	<u>.59</u>	<u>3.80</u>	<u>.70</u>
female	4.09	.95	3.76	.53	3.99	.68
male	3.69	.84	4.45	.44	3.61	.72
Mean of trials 2 through 12:						
all	<u>4.04</u>	<u>.93</u>	<u>3.98</u>	<u>.56</u>	<u>3.87</u>	<u>.72</u>
female	4.28	.84	3.96	.48	3.82	.84
male	3.81	.98	3.99	.56	3.93	.78
Mean of all 12 trials:						
all	<u>4.06</u>	<u>.93</u>	<u>3.99</u>	<u>.57</u>	<u>3.99</u>	<u>.72</u>
female	4.29	.84	3.97	.52	3.97	.84
male	3.82	.98	4.01	.55	4.01	.77

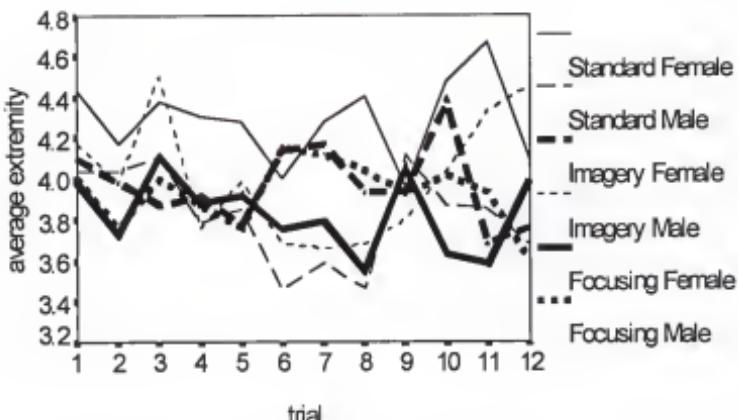


Figure 1. Average extremity ratings by Elicitation X Sex X Trial for all elicitation procedures.

The next step in the analysis was to conduct a series of ANOVAs in order to isolate the Elicitation X Sex X Trial interaction. Three split-plot ANOVAs were conducted looking for simple effects and/or lower order interactions within each of the three elicitation procedure groups. To control for an increase in the familywise error rate, a Bonferroni adjustment to the alpha level resulted in an alpha level of $p < .016$ for these analyses. The results of these analyses are presented in Tables 4 - 6 along with accompanying graphs of the elicitation group average extremity means in Figures 2 - 4.

Table 4.

ANOVA for Standard elicitation by Sex X Trial

<u>Source</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>P</u>
Within + Residual	12	1795.01		
Sex	1	2456.01	1.37	.265
Within + Residual	120	96.92		
Trial	10	102.69	1.06	.399
Sex X Trial	10	96.99	1.00	.447

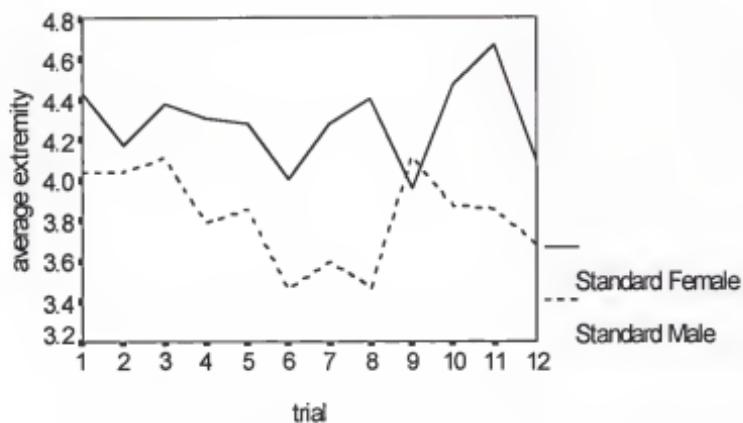


Figure 2. Mean extremity ratings by Sex X Trial for Standard elicitation.

Table 5.

ANOVA for Imagery elicitation by Sex X Trial

<u>Source</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
Within + Residual	12	218.13		
Sex	1	9.72	0.04	.836
Within + Residual	120	70.74		
Trial	10	73.67	1.04	.413
Sex X Trial	10	196.41	2.78	.004*

* p < .016

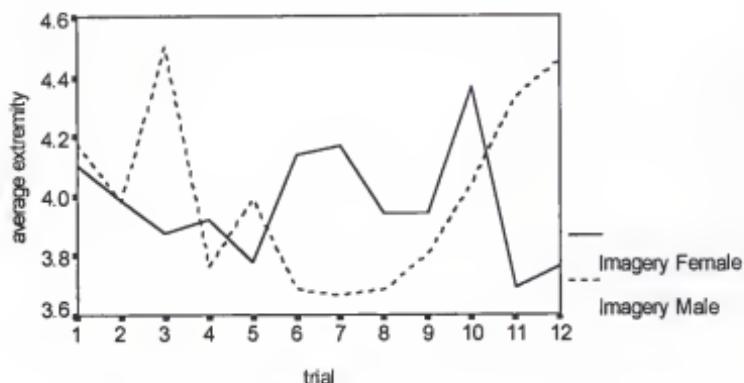


Figure 3. Mean extremity ratings by Sex X Trial for Imagery elicitation.

Table 6.

ANOVA for Focusing elicitation by Sex X Trial

<u>Source</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>P</u>
Within + Residual	12	1396.33		
Sex	1	127.27	0.09	.768
Within + Residual	120	82.33		
Trial	10	41.73	.51	.882
Sex X Trial	10	84.29	1.02	.428

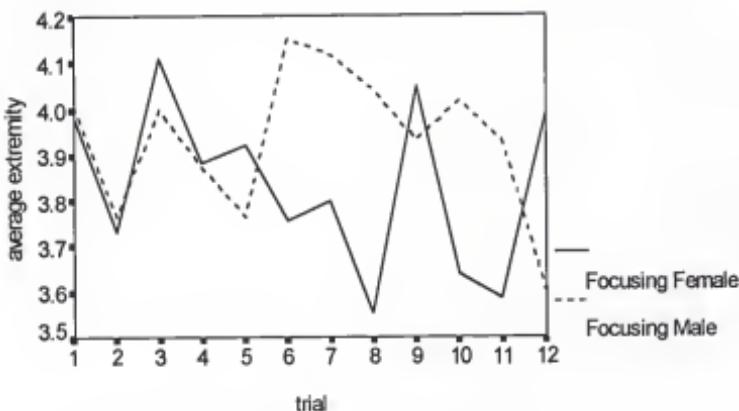


Figure 4. Mean extremity rating by Sex X Trial for Focusing elicitation.

These analyses indicate a Sex X Trial interaction for the imagery elicitation procedure (recall that the imagery procedure was utilized as a control group). This interaction was significant at the adjusted alpha level of .016. It appears that this interaction indicates that the extremity of participants' ratings varied in relation to their sex and the specific trial, with males' scores frequently demonstrating high extremity while females' scores demonstrating low extremity, and vice versa. There was no evidence of any simple effects or interactions for the elicitation independent variable, with no other tests approaching statistical significance. These results do not support Hypothesis 1 for extremity scores.

Results using importance rating score. The importance rating score, the scores that participants assigned to indicate how "important or meaningful" each bipolar construct is in their consideration of people in their life, required no manipulation. An ANOVA using the importance rating dependent variable scores to test Hypothesis 1 did not indicate a main effect for the sex or trial independent variables, nor for any interactions. However, a statistically significant main effect for the elicitation

Table 7.

ANOVA for Elicitation, Sex, and Trial main effects and interactions using importance rating for Hypothesis 1

<u>Source</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
Within + Residual	36	28.62		
Elicitation	2	92.08	3.22	.052*
Sex	1	3.37	.12	.734
Elicitation X Sex	2	63.74	2.23	.123
Within + Residual	360	6.26		
Trial	10	8.18	1.31	.225
Elicitation X Trial	20	3.62	.58	.927
Sex X Trial	10	4.79	.76	.663
Elicitation X Sex	20	6.02	.96	.508
X Trial				

* p < .05

procedure independent variable was shown at the $p < .052$ level. These results are shown in Table 7.

While this analysis does show a significant elicitation procedure main effect, it does not indicate the nature of the statistically significantly different ratings or the direction of the difference. Therefore, planned pairwise comparisons were then conducted. The first planned pairwise comparison was between the two control groups, standard and imagery elicitation. There was no statistically significant difference between these groups as indicated in Table 8.

Table 8.

ANOVA for pairwise comparisons using importance rating for Hypothesis 1

<u>Standard vs. Imagery</u>				
<u>Source</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>P</u>
Within + Residual	40	34.60		
Elicitation	1	15.46	.45	.510
<u>(Standard + Imagery) vs. Focusing</u>				
<u>Source</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>P</u>
Within + Residual	40	29.41		
Elicitation	1	191.82	6.52	.015*

* $p \leq .05$

The final planned pairwise comparison was between the combined control groups and the experimental, or Focusing elicitation, group.

The ANOVA for this comparison indicated a statistically significant difference at the $P \leq 0.015$ level, also depicted in Table 8. As the experiment was designed with these two pairwise comparisons planned, no correction factor for the alpha level was deemed necessary (Keppel, 1982, p. 240).

Now that it was determined that the two control groups were not significantly different from each other, and that the experimental (Focusing) group was significantly different from the control groups, the task remained to

Table 9.

Importance rating scores: Elicitation X Trial

Trial	<u>Standard</u>		<u>Imagery</u>		<u>Focusing</u>	
	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD
1	6.79	2.97	7.71	2.64	8.86	2.32
2	7.14	2.68	7.29	2.43	8.07	2.37
3	7.21	3.38	6.57	3.18	8.50	1.91
4	7.29	2.67	6.50	2.38	8.71	2.55
5	7.79	3.26	6.36	2.73	8.14	2.71
6	5.71	3.38	6.07	2.67	6.86	2.89
7	8.00	2.42	6.79	2.72	8.86	2.91
8	7.43	3.74	7.64	2.85	8.57	2.87
9	8.00	3.14	6.43	2.53	8.00	3.38
10	6.79	3.60	6.57	3.25	9.00	1.36
11	6.86	3.18	7.71	3.56	8.36	1.74
12	6.79	3.24	6.14	3.01	8.50	3.11
trials 2 through 12						
mean	7.18	3.15	6.73	2.85	8.32	2.53
all trials						
mean	7.15	3.13	6.82	2.82	8.37	2.51

determine the direction of the difference. The means and standard deviations of the importance rating scores are noted in Table 9, and these results are depicted in graph form in Figure 5. Since the ANOVAs were conducted using trials 2 through 12, the mean importance ratings for these trials were considered to determine the direction of the elicitation main effect. The data in Table 9 indicate that

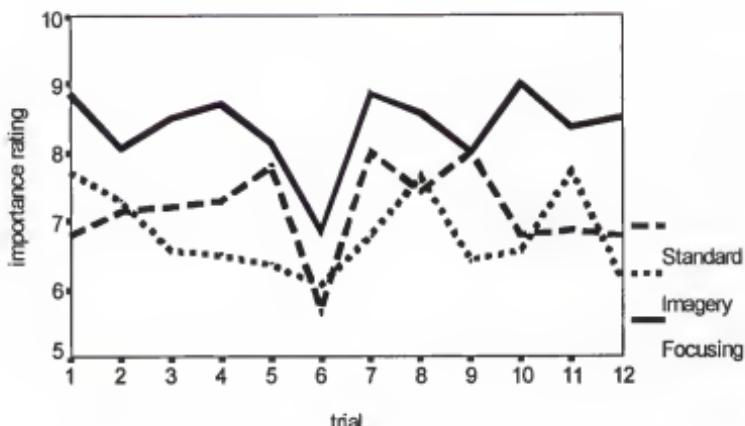


Figure 5: Importance rating scale by Elicitation X Trial.

the importance rating score for the Focusing participants ($\bar{x} = 8.32$) was higher than those of both the standard elicitation ($\bar{x} = 7.18$) and imagery elicitation participants ($\bar{x} = 6.73$). A 95 percent confidence interval places the mean importance rating score for focusing participants between 7.53 and 9.11. These results indicate that participants who underwent the focusing procedure elicitation tended to rate their elicited constructs as more meaningful overall than did participants in the standard and imagery elicitation groups.

Given that there were notable differences between elicitation procedures for the importance ratings on the first trial, which served as a baseline measure, a post hoc ANOVA was conducted on the importance ratings on the first

trial. There was not a statistically significant difference noted between the subjects prior to being exposed to the various elicitation procedures, with $F(2, 36) = 2.531$, $p \geq .094$. These results support Hypothesis 1 for the importance rating dependent variable.

Tests of Hypothesis 2

In order to test if there was an increase in meaningfulness as measured by extremity scores and/or importance rating scores as participants in one or more groups proceeded through the elicitation trials, difference scores were calculated to contrast scores from early trials with scores from later trials. Extremity and importance rating scores from the first, second, and third trials were subtracted from the extremity and importance rating scores from the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth trials respectively. For purposes of notation, the extremity difference scores are noted as "extremdiff" with the trials used in the calculation noted in parentheses, for example, $\text{extremdiff}(10-1)$ is the extremity difference score for trial 10 minus trial 1. The importance rating difference scores are noted in a like manner, with "importdiff" and the trials noted in parentheses. Specifically, the three extremity

difference scores for each subject were calculated using the following formulas:

$\text{Extremdiff}(10 - 1) = \text{trial 10 extremity} - \text{trial 1 extremity}$;
 $\text{Extremdiff}(11 - 2) = \text{trial 11 extremity} - \text{trial 2 extremity}$;
 $\text{Extremdiff}(12 - 3) = \text{trial 12 extremity} - \text{trial 3 extremity}$.

Table 10.

ANOVAs testing Hypothesis 2 using difference scores for extremity and importance rating scores

<u>Extremity Difference Scores</u>				
<u>Source</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
Within + Residual	36	216.36		
Elicitation	2	61.91	.29	.753
Sex	1	13.60	.06	.803
Elicitation X Sex	2	216.59	1.00	.377
<u>Importance rating Difference Scores</u>				
Within + Residual	36	14.47		
Elicitation	2	3.13	.22	.806
Sex	1	43.55	3.01	.091
Elicitation X Sex X Trial	2	13.54	.94	.402

The importance rating difference scores were calculated using the following formulas:

$\text{Importdiff}(10 - 1) = \text{trial 10 importance rating} - \text{trial 1 importance rating}$;

$\text{Importdiff}(11 - 2) = \text{trial 11 importance rating} - \text{trial 2}$
 importance rating;

$\text{Importdiff}(12 - 3) = \text{trial 12 importance rating} - \text{trial 3}$
 importance rating. Note that a positive difference score
 would indicate an increase in meaningfulness as indicated by
 either extremity score or importance rating.

ANOVAs were run to examine Hypothesis 2 using extremity scores and importance rating scores separately. The results of these analyses are noted in Table 10.

Table 11.

Extremity difference scores: Elicitation X Sex

		<u>Standard</u>		<u>Imagery</u>		<u>Focusing</u>	
		<u>\bar{x}</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>\bar{x}</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>\bar{x}</u>	<u>SD</u>
<u>Extremdiff(10-1)</u>							
all	<u>-1.00</u>	<u>21.15</u>	<u>1.57</u>	<u>16.25</u>	<u>-2.86</u>	<u>10.12</u>	
female	0.86	21.14	4.50	15.97	-5.85	12.29	
male	-2.86	22.67	-2.33	17.25	0.14	7.06	
<u>Extremdiff(11-2)</u>							
all	<u>2.64</u>	<u>13.65</u>	<u>-0.29</u>	<u>10.95</u>	<u>0.21</u>	<u>11.60</u>	
female	8.43	13.40	-5.00	10.53	-2.43	10.39	
male	-3.14	12.08	6.00	8.58	2.86	12.93	
<u>Extremdiff(12-3)</u>							
all	<u>-6.07</u>	<u>15.69</u>	<u>-1.43</u>	<u>7.57</u>	<u>-4.36</u>	<u>10.49</u>	
female	-4.86	13.89	-1.88	9.69	-2.00	13.08	
male	-7.29	18.36	-0.83	4.35	-6.71	7.36	

Neither of the ANOVAS produced statistically significant results. The sex independent variable for importance rating scores approached statistical significance ($p = .09$). Means and standard deviations for the difference scores, broken down by variable, group, and sex, are listed in Table 11 (differences in extremity scores) and Table 12 (differences in importance rating scores).

Table 12.

Importance rating difference scores: Elicitation X Sex

	<u>Standard</u>		<u>Imagery</u>		<u>Focusing</u>	
	<u>\bar{x}</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>\bar{x}</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>\bar{x}</u>	<u>SD</u>
<u>Importdiff(10-1)</u>						
all	<u>0.00</u>	<u>3.98</u>	<u>-1.14</u>	<u>2.66</u>	<u>0.14</u>	<u>2.41</u>
female	0.1-	4.30	-1.00	2.00	0.86	3.08
male	0.14	3.98	-1.33	3.56	-0.57	1.40
<u>Importdiff(11-2)</u>						
all	<u>-0.29</u>	<u>4.01</u>	<u>0.43</u>	<u>3.88</u>	<u>0.29</u>	<u>1.77</u>
female	2.00	3.42	0.00	4.28	0.14	1.68
male	-2.57	3.31	1.00	3.58	0.43	1.99
<u>Importdiff(11-2)</u>						
all	<u>-0.43</u>	<u>5.18</u>	<u>-0.43</u>	<u>5.03</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>3.86</u>
female	0.71	6.07	0.00	4.44	1.00	2.89
male	-1.57	4.28	-1.00	6.13	-1.00	4.65

These results do not support acceptance of Hypothesis 2 for either extremity scores or importance rating.

Further Post Hoc Analysis

Clearly, the results of the tests of Hypothesis 1, whether the Focusing elicitation would cause participants to rate constructs as more meaningful, were greatly different

Table 13.

Pearson correlations for extremity ratings and importance rating matched by trial

importance rating						
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	.138					
2		.073				
e	3		.218			
x	4			.234		
t	5				.234	
r	6					.118
e						
m						
i						
t						
y	7	8	9	10	11	12
r	7	.446				
a	8		.305			
t	9			.133		
i	10				.049	
n	11					.202
g	12					.074

for extremity score results versus importance rating results. For heuristic purposes, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated for each trial in order to examine the relationship between extremity scores and importance rating scores. The correlations are listed in Table 14. The correlations ranged from .446 (trial 7) to .049 (trial 10). No further analyses were conducted.

CHAPTER V DISCUSSION

The results of the statistical analyses for this study were mixed in their support of the two hypotheses tested. The tests of the first hypothesis, that participants trained to use the Focusing procedure would produce constructs which were more meaningful, showed a statistically significant main effect in support of this hypothesis when considering the importance rating measure of meaningfulness. However, results based on the extremity score measure of meaningfulness did not support rejection of the null hypothesis. There was also an unexpected three way interaction for Elicitation X Sex X Trial variables when extremity scores were considered.

In regard to the second hypothesis, that participants using the Focusing elicitation procedure would produce more meaningful constructs in latter trials, when compared to early trials, while the control group participants would tend to produce less meaningful constructs in latter trials, the hypothesis was not supported by the results using either

extremity scores or importance rating scores. There was some indication of a Sex variable effect noted for the differences between early trial importance ratings and late trial importance rating ($p = .09$). However, This failed to meet the a priori setting of statistical significance which was set at the $p < .05$ level.

The possible implications of these findings, the limitations of this study, and applications of this area of study to constructivist approaches to assessment and psychotherapy, will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

Effects of Elicitation Procedure on the Overall Level of Meaningfulness

Contrary to predictions, the extremity scores for the Focusing participants were not higher (in fact, were slightly lower) than the extremity scores for participants in the two control groups. The mean rating on the six point Likert scale for a single element (person), for a single construct, ranged from 3.87 (Focusing elicitation) to 4.04 (standard elicitation) when one considers trials two through twelve (recall that all participants underwent an identical procedure during the first trial). The only noteworthy difference in extremity scores for the elicitation procedure variable is that participants in the imagery control group

had a markedly lower standard deviation for extremity. Specifically, SD = 8.80 was noted for the imagery participants versus SD = 15.50 for standard participants and SD = 13.84 for Focusing participants. This pattern was consistent for males and females. This difference in score variance may be related to the Elicitation X Sex X Trial interaction noted for extremity scores, which will be discussed later.

Unlike the extremity measure, the importance rating measure did show a statistically significant main effect for the elicitation procedure variable. This effect was significant at the $p < .015$ level. Post hoc analysis of the first trial ratings indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference at baseline between the groups for the importance ratings. Pairwise comparisons indicated there was no statistically significant difference between the two control groups (standard elicitation and imagery elicitation). When these two control groups were combined, they were shown to be different from the experimental group (Focusing Elicitation). A comparison of the mean importance rating scores indicates that the Focusing group had higher average importance rating scores than the control groups. These results for the importance rating dependent variable are consistent with the prediction made in Hypothesis 1.

Given that the importance rating score is based solely on the participants' evaluation of how meaningful or important a construct is, it is clear that the participants' perception of how meaningful a construct is differed depending on the elicitation procedure they utilized. The participants who used an experiential approach to construct elicitation (Focusing elicitation group) perceived their constructs as being more meaningful in how they view people in their lives.

An intervention which provides a means to gain access to those constructs which are more meaningful in a client's construct system can serve as a valuable tool in assessment and psychotherapy. It is the ability to identify core issues and to communicate the meaning of those issues which is central to a constructivist approach to therapy. As Robert Neimeyer notes,

. . . constructivists envision the basic goal of therapy as the promotion of this meaning-making activity rather than the 'correction' of presumed dysfunctions or deficits in the client's thinking, feeling, or behaving . . . Therefore, in assessment, constructivists concentrate on identifying and eventually reformulating the central metaphors that inform the client's self-narrative. (R. Neimeyer, 1995 a, p.17)

As an aid to the process of identifying those verbal representations of core constructs, techniques which enhance experiential awareness and the verbalization of that

awareness hold promise for improving the level of services which psychotherapists can provide their clients.

Techniques such as the Focusing elicitation used in this study may enable the therapist and client to identify and begin work on more meaningful issues earlier in the psychotherapy process. Consequently, by identifying core issues earlier, the total amount of time needed to accomplish therapeutic goals may be shortened. In these times of managed care and shrinking mental health budgets, a process which could decrease the allocation of therapy resources could prove quite valuable. It remains to be seen if using experiential approaches will yield improvements in therapy and/or reductions in the therapy time required to achieve therapeutic goals. However, the results noted above indicate that these are viable avenues for future study.

Changes In Meaningfulness Across Trials

The prediction for the second hypothesis, that Focusing would result in participants producing progressively more meaningful constructs as they proceeded through the trials, was not supported by the results. The extremity scores indicated a decrease or little change in meaningfulness when the last three trials were compared with the first three trials. Moreover, the ANOVA indicated that there was no

significant difference between the extremity score differences produced by the Focusing participants versus extremity score differences produced by the standard and imagery participants. Thus, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. That there was a decrease in meaningfulness from early trials to later trials is consistent with the findings reported by McDonagh and Adams-Webber (1987).

For the importance rating scores, there also was no indication of a main effect for the elicitation procedure variable. The level of meaningfulness, as indicated by importance rating, appeared to remain relatively unchanged across trials.

The results for both measures of meaningfulness do not permit the rejection of the second null hypothesis. There is no indication that the Focusing elicitation procedure used progressively increased the level of construct meaningfulness. One possible explanation for the lack of support for the second hypothesis is that the actual Focusing procedure works to take one to deeper levels of a problem by following a string of connected experiences, where one felt sense leads to a new level of awareness, which leads to a new felt sense, and so on. Such a progression would be similar to the progression which occurs when one utilizes Hinkle's (1966) laddering technique. However, in this study, the constructs which the

participants Focused on were not generated one from another, rather they were generated in the different trials by different triadic sorts of people. Thus, there was not a progression from construct to construct across trials. This may explain why the predicted increase in meaningfulness did not occur.

Elicitation X Sex X Trial Interaction

The ANOVA testing the first hypothesis (differences in overall meaningfulness) using the extremity score measure indicated an Elicitation X Sex X Trial interaction. A series of pairwise comparisons indicated that there was a statistically significant ($p < .004$) effect for a Sex X Trial interaction for participants in the guided imagery control group. Recall from the earlier discussion that the standard deviations for the imagery group extremity scores were nearly half as large as the standard deviations for the other two groups.

When one inspects the means of the average Likert scale ratings (depicted in Figure 3, Chapter IV), it appears that the ratings produced by males and females tended to vary in contrasting directions on several of the trials. For example, while male and female ratings were nearly identical in trial #2, there was a large increase in the extremity rating for males for trial #3 and a simultaneous decrease

for females' extremity ratings. A similar pattern can be seen throughout the remaining trials. The disparity between the extremity scores produced by females and males was not expected and it prompted further inspection.

In looking at the script for the guided imagery elicitation, the imaginary beach trip, it appears that males tended to produce higher extremity scores when the depicted imagery step included specific tasks, such as packing the car or selecting a location to set up on the beach. The males tended to produce lower extremity scores when the depicted task was less specific, such as playing on the beach or driving to the beach. In contrast, females tended to produce lower extremity scores when the imagery tasks were specific, and higher scores when the tasks were less specific. However, these patterns were not consistent for trials #10 and #11. For trial #10 the imagery task was to pack the car to return home, a relatively specific task. Contrary to the results of trial #3 (pack the car to go to the beach), males produced lower extremity scores than females, the opposite of the results in trial #3. Also, for trial #11, driving back home, females produced higher scores than males produced; this too is the opposite of the trial where the task was to imagine driving to the beach (trial #4).

Recall that the guided imagery tasks were used only to provide a control for interaction with the experimenter, to provide participants with an opportunity for experiential awareness without instruction to attend to experience, and to control for the overall time required to complete the experiment. The completion of the repertory grid instrument was not otherwise altered. Most notably, participants were to elicit constructs and make their ratings by the same procedures as the standard elicitation group with the exception of completing an imagery task between each trial. The participants were not instructed to relate the "trip to the beach" imagery to the repertory grid task in any way. Several of the participants even commented during the debriefing that they did not understand how the beach imagery was related to the task of filling out the repertory grid.

Given that the imagery task was not integral to the completion of the grid, but rather only interrupted the grid trials, it appears that there was some sort of carry-over effect from the imagery task to the grid task. What does it mean that imagery tasks affected how extremely participants rated persons when reflecting on their personal constructs? Why is it that this effect tended to be opposite in males and females? While these questions do not have a bearing on the hypotheses being tested for this study, they certainly

warrant further study for those interested in gender differences, guided imagery, and/or construct meaningfulness.

Comparing the Measures of Meaningfulness:
Extremity and Importance rating

It is not clear why Hypothesis 1 was supported by the importance rating measure of meaningfulness and not the extremity score measure of meaningfulness. Additionally, the interaction noted above was evident for the extremity measure, but not for the importance rating measure. The low levels of correlation between the extremity scores and the importance rating scores, from .049 to .446, indicate that there is little relationship between what the extremity scores measure as "meaningfulness" and what the importance rating scores measure as "meaningfulness."

As indicated in the literature review, there is currently no known definitive measure of the level of construct meaningfulness within a person's construct system. As was noted by Metzler and G. Neimeyer (1988) and R. Neimeyer (1993), the various measures which have been utilized to measure construct meaningfulness appear to capture differing aspects of the meaningfulness (or construct ordination) dimension. Accordingly, these authors have proposed using multiple measures to gauge construct

meaningfulness. This appears to be the best available method for measuring meaningfulness. While this "shotgun" approach to measurement seems rather crude, it appears to be the best that current constructivist researchers have to offer. It appears that a fuller understanding of construct meaningfulness and ordination, along with better measures of these dimensions, will be necessary for research into meaningfulness and ordination to progress.

In this vein, this study used "importance rating" scores, a Likert type rating of construct meaningfulness which has not previously been reported in the literature. This measure was used in an attempt to avoid the difficulties noted for use of the more commonly used rank-order measure. As was noted in the literature review, the rank-order score does not allow for depiction of similar meaningfulness levels among constructs which are not related linearly and, being an ordinal variable, rank-order is not an appropriate variable for use when parametric statistics will be utilized. Additionally, the importance rating measure allows for comparisons of the omnibus level of perceived meaningfulness. The rank-order method does not allow for such an omnibus measure because all participants are limited to using every available score and using each score only one time, thus all participants have the same mean rating independent of any experimental manipulation.

While the importance rating clearly does not capture all that is meant by construct meaningfulness, it does appear to be an improvement over the rank-order method of measuring participants' perception of construct meaningfulness. However, it is not clear if the perception reflected in the importance rating score is related to any other factors of construct meaningfulness or ordination.

Concluding Remarks

One must recall that this study was not a test of the Focusing procedure, but rather an attempt to determine if incorporating experiential techniques into the repertory grid assessment enhances the grid procedure. The methods used to train participants to utilize experiential awareness were borrowed from Focusing, but they do not do justice to Focusing. As Eugene Gendlin notes (1996), training in Focusing typically requires three to eight hours of face to face contact. And, even though Focusing does allow one to keep content private, Focusing is a very intimate experience which often leads to deeply emotional awareness. Such a level of intimacy and emotional awareness was not fostered with the participants in this study as they were students completing a research participation requirement and not therapy clients.

Furthermore, an enhancement to an assessment procedure which requires three to eight hours of preparation would not be practical. The procedure utilized in the study required little additional time. Most participants who completed the repertory grid under standard elicitation procedures completed the task in approximately forty-five minutes, while those participants who used the Focusing elicitation usually took between an hour and an hour and fifteen minutes to complete the repertory grid.

This study provides encouragement for the continued investigation into the use of experiential methods in constructivistic approaches to assessment. Clearly there remain a multitude of unanswered questions regarding Focusing, repertory grid techniques, construct meaningfulness, and construct hierarchy. That an experientially oriented assessment technique helps to elicit more meaningful, or at least perceived as more meaningful, constructs could help therapists to target their interventions and help clients to have more clarity about what they consider truly important.

Additionally, such an experiential approach may function to keep clients actively engaged in the therapeutic process. As Gendlin notes, "many clients disconnect from their bodies during their therapy hours. The body is left sitting there, immobile, whether slumped or upright. It

just waits till the end of the hour. Much more therapeutic change can happen if the body participates" (1996, p.279). By actively engaging a bodily felt sense level of awareness with a cognitive verbal level of awareness, experiential approaches provide an avenue for the integration of a person's total experience. As Guidano notes, emotions and feelings exist in consciousness independent of cognition. Those feelings and emotions are experienced as an "externally bound perturbation" (Guidano, 1995 a, p.104) until such time as the individual is able to translate that affect into cognitive awareness. This translation provides a fuller understanding of all that it is that a person knows on all levels of awareness. It is this more holistic awareness which those calling for more experiential approaches seek. Perhaps this study can serve as a step in a progression toward a more experientially aware psychology.

APPENDIX A
PRELIMINARY STUDY RESULTS

The preliminary study conducted by Kaia Calbeck, Stephen Pittman, and Franz Epting, Ph.D. (1995-6) produced the following means and standard deviations for extremity scores and a self-rating of construct meaningfulness (which was a rank ordering) for 20 triadic sorts:

<u>Triad</u>	<u>\bar{x} extremity</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>\bar{x} rank order</u>	<u>SD</u>
1	85.51	16.63	10.44	6.20
2	88.53	17.21	8.90	5.81
3	85.80	17.09	11.10	5.50
4	88.89	19.24	11.26	5.76
5	85.64	17.97	10.73	5.80
6	86.31	15.04	11.37	5.86
7	87.33	18.47	9.79	5.62
8	87.59	18.53	10.17	5.40
9	90.70	18.60	9.81	5.78
10	85.00	16.65	11.74	5.84
11	87.24	16.65	11.64	5.13
12	87.13	20.47	11.70	6.00
13	86.83	17.71	11.11	5.53
14	84.01	17.81	10.21	5.64
15	83.64	15.20	11.21	5.02
16	86.20	17.48	10.90	5.32
17	88.99	17.91	8.30	5.60
18	87.06	16.44	10.17	5.40
19	88.16	17.73	9.19	5.62
20	86.10	18.80	8.73	5.89
mean for all triads	86.83	17.58	10.42	5.68

The triadic sorts were composed of the following combinations of role titles.

- Triadic
sort #
- 1: self, opposite gender friend, and same gender friend.
 - 2: self, romantic partner, and opposite gender friend.
 - 3: self, person you feel sorry for, and happiest person you know.
 - 4: self, person you would like to know better, and person around whom you feel uncomfortable.
 - 5: self, romantic partner, and prior romantic partner.
 - 6: mother, father, and brother.
 - 7: mother, romantic partner, and prior romantic partner.
 - 8: father, romantic partner, and prior romantic partner.
 - 9: mother, father, and person around whom you feel uncomfortable.
 - 10: father, person who meets the highest ethical standards, and most successful person you know.
 - 11: self, brother, and sister.
 - 12: self, mother, and father.
 - 13: self, father, and brother.
 - 14: self, mother, and sister.
 - 15: self, father, and sister.
 - 16: most successful person you know, person who meets the highest ethical standards, and employer/supervisor.
 - 17: opposite gender person you dislike, same gender person you dislike, and closest same gender friend.
 - 18: most intelligent person you know, favorite teacher, and unhappiest person you know.
 - 19: closest same gender friend, closest opposite gender friend, and person you would not trust.
 - 20: romantic partner, prior romantic partner, and person around whom you feel uncomfortable.

APPENDIX B
REPERTORY GRID INSTRUMENT

Note: For repertory grid administration, the right hand edge of pages 1--12 are trimmed off so as to expose the NAMES column on the final page.

page 1 Consider Persons rating# _____

WAY TWO OF THE THREE ARE ALIKE
AND DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER
B, F, G

	Consider Persons	rating# _____	THE OPPOSITE OF THIS CHARACTERISTIC
{A}	6	5	{A}
{B}	6	5	{B}
{C}	6	5	{C}
{D}	6	5	{D}
{E}	6	5	{E}
{F}	6	5	{F}
{G}	6	5	{G}
{H}	6	5	{H}
{I}	6	5	{I}
{J}	6	5	{J}
{K}	6	5	{K}
{L}	6	5	{L}
{M}	6	5	{M}
{N}	6	5	{N}
{O}	6	5	{O}
{P}	6	5	{P}
{Q}	6	5	{Q}

2

Consider Persons

Rating#

242

WAY TWO OF THE THREE ARE ALIKE
AND DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER

THE OPPOSITE OF THIS CHARACTERISTIC

page	3	Consider Persons	A, L, Q	rating#	_____
WAY TWO OF THE THREE ARE ALIKE AND DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER					
{A}	6	5	4	3	2
{B}	6	5	4	3	2
{C}	6	5	4	3	2
{D}	6	5	4	3	2
{E}	6	5	4	3	2
{F}	6	5	4	3	2
{G}	6	5	4	3	2
{H}	6	5	4	3	2
{I}	6	5	4	3	2
{J}	6	5	4	3	2
{K}	6	5	4	3	2
{L}	6	5	4	3	2
{M}	6	5	4	3	2
{N}	6	5	4	3	2
{O}	6	5	4	3	2
{P}	6	5	4	3	2
{Q}	6	5	4	3	2
{A}				1	2
{B}				1	2
{C}				1	2
{D}				1	2
{E}				1	2
{F}				1	2
{G}				1	2
{H}				1	2
{I}				1	2
{J}				1	2
{K}				1	2
{L}				1	2
{M}				1	2
{N}				1	2
{O}				1	2
{P}				1	2
{Q}				1	2
{A}				3	4
{B}				3	4
{C}				3	4
{D}				3	4
{E}				3	4
{F}				3	4
{G}				3	4
{H}				3	4
{I}				3	4
{J}				3	4
{K}				3	4
{L}				3	4
{M}				3	4
{N}				3	4
{O}				3	4
{P}				3	4
{Q}				3	4

page 4

Consider Persons

rating# _____

WAY TWO OF THE THREE ARE ALIKE
AND DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER

A, B, E

THE OPPOSITE OF THIS
CHARACTERISTIC

{A}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	(A)
{B}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	(B)
{C}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	(C)
{D}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	(D)
{E}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	(E)
{F}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	(F)
{G}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	(G)
{H}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	(H)
{I}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	(I)
{J}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	(J)
{K}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	(K)
{L}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	(L)
{M}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	(M)
{N}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	(N)
{O}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	(O)
{P}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	(P)
{Q}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	(Q)

page 5 Consider Persons rating# _____

WAY TWO OF THE THREE ARE ALIKE
AND DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER

A, B, C

THE OPPOSITE OF THIS
CHARACTERISTIC

{A}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	{A}
{B}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	{B}
{C}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	{C}
{D}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	{D}
{E}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	{E}
{F}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	{F}
{G}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	{G}
{H}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	{H}
{I}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	{I}
{J}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	{J}
{K}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	{K}
{L}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	{L}
{M}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	{M}
{N}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	{N}
{O}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	{O}
{P}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	{P}
{Q}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	{Q}

page 6 Consider Persons rating# _____

P, M, O
WAY TWO OF THE THREE ARE ALIKE
AND DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER

	Consider Persons	P, M, O	rating# _____	THE OPPOSITE OF THIS CHARACTERISTIC
{A}	6	5	4	3
{B}	6	5	4	3
{C}	6	5	4	3
{D}	6	5	4	3
{E}	6	5	4	3
{F}	6	5	4	3
{G}	6	5	4	3
{H}	6	5	4	3
{I}	6	5	4	3
{J}	6	5	4	3
{K}	6	5	4	3
{L}	6	5	4	3
{M}	6	5	4	3
{N}	6	5	4	3
{O}	6	5	4	3
{P}	6	5	4	3
{Q}	6	5	4	3

page 7

Consider Persons

rating# ____

C, F, G

WAY TWO OF THE THREE ARE ALIKE
AND DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERTHE OPPOSITE OF THIS
CHARACTERISTIC

(A)	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(A)
(B)	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(B)
(C)	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(C)
(D)	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(D)
(E)	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(E)
(F)	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(F)
(G)	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(G)
(H)	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(H)
(I)	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(I)
(J)	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(J)
(K)	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(K)
(L)	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(L)
(M)	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(M)
(N)	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(N)
(O)	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(O)
(P)	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(P)
(Q)	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(Q)

page 8 Consider Persons rating# _____

WAY TWO OF THE THREE ARE ALIKE
AND DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER
A, F, G

	Consider Persons	rating# _____	THE OPPOSITE OF THIS CHARACTERISTIC
{A}	6	5	4
{B}	6	5	4
{C}	6	5	4
{D}	6	5	4
{E}	6	5	4
{F}	6	5	4
{G}	6	5	4
{H}	6	5	4
{I}	6	5	4
{J}	6	5	4
{K}	6	5	4
{L}	6	5	4
{M}	6	5	4
{N}	6	5	4
{O}	6	5	4
{P}	6	5	4
{Q}	6	5	4
			(A)
			(B)
			(C)
			(D)
			(E)
			(F)
			(G)
			(H)
			(I)
			(J)
			(K)
			(L)
			(M)
			(N)
			(O)
			(P)
			(Q)

page 9 rating# _____

B,C,D

WAY TWO OF THE THREE ARE ALIKE
AND DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER

THE OPPOSITE OF THIS
CHARACTERISTIC

	Consider Persons	B,C,D	rating# _____
{A}	6	5	4
{B}	6	5	4
{C}	6	5	4
{D}	6	5	4
{E}	6	5	4
{F}	6	5	4
{G}	6	5	4
{H}	6	5	4
{I}	6	5	4
{J}	6	5	4
{K}	6	5	4
{L}	6	5	4
{M}	6	5	4
{N}	6	5	4
{O}	6	5	4
{P}	6	5	4
{Q}	6	5	4

page 10 Consider Persons rating# _____

WAY TWO OF THE THREE ARE ALIKE
AND DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER

A,D,E

THE OPPOSITE OF THIS
CHARACTERISTIC

{A}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	{A}
{B}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	{B}
{C}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	{C}
{D}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	{D}
{E}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	{E}
{F}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	{F}
{G}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	{G}
{H}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	{H}
{I}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	{I}
{J}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	{J}
{K}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	{K}
{L}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	{L}
{M}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	{M}
{N}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	{N}
{O}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	{O}
{P}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	{P}
{Q}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	{Q}

WAY TWO OF THE THREE ARE ALIKE
AND DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERTHE OPPOSITE OF THIS
CHARACTERISTIC

{A}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(A)
{B}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(B)
{C}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(C)
{D}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(D)
{E}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(E)
{F}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(F)
{G}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(G)
{H}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(H)
{I}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(I)
{J}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(J)
{K}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(K)
{L}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(L)
{M}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(M)
{N}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(N)
{O}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(O)
{P}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(P)
{Q}	6	5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	(Q)

Your Gender: _____

FEMALE MALE

Your Age: _____

In the NAMES column write the name of a person that fits the accompanying ROLE TITLE. You may use first names, nicknames, or whatever will help you identify the person. ONLY USE THE NAMES OF PEOPLE YOU KNOW PERSONALLY. Do not use any one person more than once. If you can not think of anyone that specifically fits a given role, fill in the name of a person you think would be the closest fit for you.

Subject # _____

ROLE TITLES

- {A} Self _____
- {B} Your mother (or stepmother) _____
- {C} Your father (or stepfather) _____
- {D} Brother nearest you in age _____
- {E} Sister nearest you in age _____
- {F} Romantic partner (or most recent) _____
- {G} Prior romantic partner _____
- {H} Closest opposite gender friend _____
- {I} Favorite teacher/professor _____
- {J} Most intelligent person you know _____
- {K} Closest same gender friend _____
- {L} Person you feel sorry _____
- {M} Person with the highest ethical standards _____
- {N} Unhappiest person you know _____
- {O} Employer or supervisor _____
- {P} Most successful person you know _____
- {Q} Happiest person you personally know _____

APPENDIX C
CONSTRUCT MEANINGFULNESS RATING SCALE

Indicate how meaningful or important this pair of descriptors is
when you think about people in your life using the scale below.

Not very meaningful	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10 - 11 - 12	Very Meaningful
Not very important		Very Important

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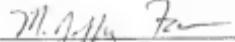
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Stephen D. Pittman was born April 22, 1961, in Killeen, Texas. He graduated from high school in Centerville, Ohio, in 1979. Steve returned to school in 1983 and completed his Bachelor of Science degree in psychology at The Ohio State University in June, 1986. Steve then began his graduate training in the Counseling Psychology doctoral program at the University of Florida. He obtained his Master of Science degree in May, 1993, and attended the Albany Psychology Internship Consortium internship program during the 1994-95 academic year. Steve received his Ph.D. from the Counseling Psychology program at the University of Florida in May, 1997.

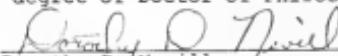
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Franz R. Epting, Chair
Professor of Psychology

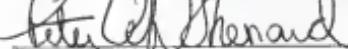
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M. Jeffrey Farrar
Associate Professor of Psychology

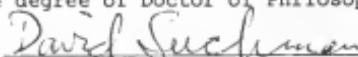
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Dorothy D. Nevill
Professor of Psychology

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Peter A.D. Sherrard
Associate Professor of Counselor Education

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.


David I. Suchman
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This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of Psychology in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

May, 1997


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